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WE AND THE WORLD:

A BOOK FOR BOYS.

PART I.

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BY

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SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,
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DEDICATED

TO MY TWELVE NEPHEWS,

WILLIAM, FRANCIS, STEPHEN, PHILIP, LEONARD,

GODFREY, AND DAVID SMITH;

REGINALD, NICHOLAS, AND IVOR GATTY;

ALEXANDER, AND CHARLES SCOTT GATTY.

J. H. E.

WE AND THE WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

"All these common features of English landscape evince a calm and settled security, and hereditary transmission of home-bred virtues and local attachments, that speak deeply and touchingly for the moral character of the nation."—WASHINGTON IRVING'S *Sketch Book*.

IT was a great saying of my poor mother's, especially if my father had been out of spirits about the crops, or the rise in wages, or our prospects, and had thought better of it again, and showed her the bright side of things, "Well, my dear, I'm sure we've much to be thankful for."

Which they had, and especially, I often think, for the fact that I was not the eldest son. I gave them more trouble than I can think of with a comfortable conscience as it was; but they had Jem to tread in my father's shoes, and he was a good son to them—GOD bless him for it!

I can remember hearing my father say—"It's bad enough to have Jack with his nose in a book, and his

head in the clouds, on a fine June day, with the hay all out, and the glass falling: but if Jem had been a lad of whims and fancies, I think it would have broken my poor old heart."

I often wonder what made me bother my head with books, and where the perverse spirit came from that possessed me, and tore me, and drove me forth into the world. It did not come from my parents. My mother's family were far from being literary or even enterprising, and my father's people were a race of small yeomen squires, whose talk was of dogs and horses and cattle, and the price of hay. We were north-of-England people, but not of a commercial or adventurous class, though we were within easy reach of some of the great manufacturing centres. Quiet country folk we were; old-fashioned, and boastful of our old-fashionedness, albeit it meant little more than that our manners and customs were a generation behindhand of the more cultivated folk, who live nearer to London. We were proud of our name too, which is written in the earliest registers and records of the parish, honourably connected with the land we lived on; but which may be searched for in vain in the lists of great or even learned Englishmen.

It never troubled dear old Jem that there had not been a man of mark among all the men who had handed on our name from generation to generation.

He had no feverish ambitions, and as to books, I doubt if he ever opened a volume, if he could avoid it, after he wore out three horn-books and our mother's patience in learning his letters—not even the mottle-backed prayer-books which were handed round for family prayers, and out of which we said the psalms for the day, verse about with my father. I generally found the place, and Jem put his arm over my shoulder and read with me.

He was a yeoman born. I can just remember—when I was not three years old and he was barely four—the fright our mother got from his fearless familiarity with the beasts about the homestead. He and I were playing on the grass-plat before the house when Dolly, an ill-tempered dun cow we knew well by sight and name, got into the garden and drew near us. As I sat on the grass—my head at no higher level than the buttercups in the field beyond—Dolly loomed so large above me that I felt frightened and began to cry. But Jem, only conscious that she had no business there, picked up a stick nearly as big as himself, and trotted indignantly to drive her out. Our mother caught sight of him from an upper window, and knowing that the temper of the cow was not to be trusted, she called wildly to Jem, "Come in, dear, quick! Come in! Dolly's loose!"

"I drive her out!" was Master Jem's reply; and

with his little straw hat well on the back of his head, he waddled bravely up to the cow, flourishing his stick. The process interested me, and I dried my tears and encouraged my brother; but Dolly looked sourly at him, and began to lower her horns.

"Shoo! shoo!" shouted Jem, waving his arms in farming-man fashion, and belabouring Dolly's neck with the stick. "Shoo! shoo!"

Dolly planted her forefeet, and dipped her head for a push, but catching another small whack on her face, and more authoritative "Shoos!" she changed her mind, and swinging heavily round, trotted off towards the field, followed by Jem, waving, shouting, and victorious. My mother got out in time to help him to fasten the gate, which he was much too small to do by himself, though, with true squirely instincts, he was trying to secure it.

But from our earliest days we both lived on intimate terms with all the live stock. "Laddie," an old black cart-horse, was one of our chief friends. Jem and I used to sit, one behind the other, on his broad back, when our little legs could barely straddle across, and to "grip" with our knees in orthodox fashion was a matter of principle, but impossible in practice. Laddie's pace was always discreet, however, and I do not think we should have found a saddle any improvement, even as to safety, upon his warm, satin-

smooth back. We steered him more by shouts and smacks than by the one short end of a dirty rope which was our apology for reins; that is, if we had any hand in guiding his course. I am now disposed to think that Laddie guided himself.

But our beast friends were many. The yellow yard-dog always slobbered joyfully at our approach; partly moved, I fancy, by love for us, and partly by the exciting hope of being let off his chain. When we went into the farmyard the fowls came running to our feet for corn, the pigeons fluttered down over our heads for peas, and the pigs humped themselves against the wall of the sty as tightly as they could lean, in hopes of having their backs scratched. The long sweet faces of the plough horses, as they turned in the furrows, were as familiar to us as the faces of any other labourers in our father's fields, and we got fond of the lambs and ducks and chickens, and got used to their being killed and eaten when our acquaintance reached a certain date, like other farm-bred folk, which is one amongst the many proofs of the adaptability of human nature.

So far so good, on my part as well as Jem's. That I should like the animals "on the place"—the domesticated animals, the workable animals, the eatable animals—this was right and natural, and befitting my father's son. But my far greater fancy for

wild, queer, useless, mischievous, and even disgusting creatures often got me into trouble. Want of sympathy became absolute annoyance as I grew older, and wandered farther, and adopted a perfect menagerie of odd beasts in whom my friends could see no good qualities: such as the snake I kept warm in my trousers-pocket; the stickleback that I am convinced I tamed in its own waters; the toad for whom I built a red house of broken drainpipes at the back of the strawberry bed, where I used to go and tickle his head on the sly; and the long-whiskered rat in the barn, who knew me well, and whose death nearly broke my heart, though I had seen generations of unoffending ducklings pass to the kitchen without a tear.

I think it must have been the beasts that made me take to reading: I was so fond of Buffon's *Natural History*, of which there was an English abridgment on the dining-room bookshelves.

But my happiest reading days began after the bookseller's agent came round, and teased my father into taking in the *Penny Cyclopædia;* and those numbers in which there was a beast, bird, fish, or reptile were the numbers for me!

I must, however, confess that if a love for reading had been the only way in which I had gone astray from the family habits and traditions, I don't think I should have had much to complain of in the way of blame.

My father "pish"ed and "pshaw"ed when he caught me "poking over" books, but my dear mother was inclined to regard me as a genius, whose learning might bring renown of a new kind into the family. In a quiet way of her own, as she went gently about household matters, or knitted my father's stockings, she was a great day-dreamer—one of the most unselfish kind, however; a builder of air-castles, for those she loved to dwell in; planned, fitted, and furnished according to the measure of her affections.

It was perhaps because my father always began by disparaging her suggestions that (by the balancing action of some instinctive sense of justice) he almost always ended by adopting them, whether they were wise or foolish. He came at last to listen very tolerantly when she dilated on my future greatness.

"And if he isn't quite so good a farmer as Jem, it's not as if he were the eldest, you know, my dear. I'm sure we've much to be thankful for that dear Jem takes after you as he does. But if Jack turns out a genius, which please God we may live to see and be proud of, he'll make plenty of money, and he must live with Jem when we're gone, and let Jem manage it for him, for clever people are never any good at taking care of what they get. And when their families get too big for the old house, love, Jack must build, as he'll be well able to afford to do, and Jem must let

him have the land. The Ladycroft would be as good as anywhere, and a pretty name for the house. It would be a good thing to have some one at that end of the property too, and then the boys would always be together."

Poor dear mother! The kernel of her speech lay in the end of it—"The boys would always be together." I am sure in her tender heart she blessed my bookish genius, which was to make wealth as well as fame, and so keep me "about the place," and the home birds for ever in the nest.

I knew nothing of it then, of course; but at this time she used to turn my father's footsteps towards the Ladycroft every Sunday, between the services, and never wearied of planning my house.

She was standing one day, her smooth brow knitted in perplexity, before the big pink thorn, and had stood so long absorbed in this brown study, that my father said, with a sly smile,

"Well, love, and where are you now?"

"In the dairy, my dear," she answered quite gravely. "The window is to the north of course, and I'm afraid the thorn must come down."

My father laughed heartily. He had some sense of humour, but my mother had none. She was one of the sweetest-tempered women that ever lived, and never dreamed that any one was laughing at her. I

have heard my father say she lay awake that night, and when he asked her why she could not sleep he found she was fretting about the pink thorn.

"It looked so pretty to-day, my dear; and thorns are so bad to move!"

My father knew her too well to hope to console her by joking about it. He said gravely: "There's plenty of time yet, love. The boys are only just in trousers; and we may think of some way to spare it before we come to bricks and mortar."

"I've thought of it every way, my dear, I'm afraid," said my mother with a sigh. But she had full confidence in my father—a trouble shared with him was half cured, and she soon fell asleep.

She certainly had a vivid imagination, though it never was cultivated to literary ends. Perhaps, after all, I inherited that idle fancy, those unsatisfied yearnings of my restless heart, from her! Mental peculiarities are said to come from one's mother.

It was Jem who inherited her sweet temper.

Dear old Jem! He and I were the best of good friends always, and that sweet temper of his had no doubt much to do with it. He was very much led by me, though I was the younger, and whatever mischief we got into it was always my fault.

It was I who persuaded him to run away from school, under the, as it proved, insufficient disguise of

walnut-juice on our faces and hands. It was I who began to dig the hole which was to take us through from the kitchen-garden to the other side of the world. (Jem helped me to fill it up again, when the gardener made a fuss about our having chosen the asparagus-bed as the point of departure, which we did because the earth was soft there.) In desert islands or castles, balloons or boats, my hand was first and foremost, and mischief or amusement of every kind, by earth, air, or water, was planned for us by me.

Now and then, however, Jem could crow over me. How he did deride me when I asked our mother the foolish question—"Have bees whiskers?"

The bee who betrayed me into this folly was a bumble of the utmost beauty. The bars of his coat "burned" as "brightly" as those of the tiger in Wombwell's menagerie, and his fur was softer than my mother's black velvet mantle. I knew, for I had kissed him lightly as he sat on the window-frame. I had seen him brushing first one side and then the other side of his head, with an action so exactly that of my father brushing his whiskers on Sunday morning, that I thought the bee might be trimming his; not knowing that he was sweeping the flower-dust off his antennæ with his legs, and putting it into his waistcoat pocket to make bee bread of.

It was the liberty I took in kissing him that made him not sit still any more, and hindered me from examining his cheeks for myself. He began to dance all over the window, humming his own tune, and before he got tired of dancing he found a chink open at the top sash, and sailed away like a spot of plush upon the air.

I had thus no opportunity of becoming intimate with him, but he was the cause of a more lasting friendship—my friendship with Isaac Irvine, the bee-keeper. For when I asked that silly question, my mother said, "Not that I ever saw, love;" and my father said, "If he wants to know about bees, he should go to old Isaac. He'll tell him plenty of queer stories about them."

The first time I saw the beekeeper was in church, on Catechism Sunday, in circumstances which led to my disgracing myself in a manner that must have been very annoying to my mother, who had taken infinite pains in teaching us.

The provoking part of it was that I had not had a fear of breaking down. With poor Jem it was very different. He took twice as much pains as I did, but he could not get things into his head, and even if they did stick there he found it almost harder to say them properly. We began to learn the Catechism when we were three years old, and we went on till long after we

were in trousers; and I am sure Jem never got the three words "and an inheritor" tidily off the tip of his tongue within my remembrance. And I have seen both him and my mother crying over them on a hot Sunday afternoon. He was always in a fright when we had to say the Catechism in church, and that day, I remember, he shook so that I could hardly stand straight myself, and Bob Furniss, the blacksmith's son, who stood on the other side of him, whispered quite loud, "Eh! see thee, how Master Jem *dodders!*" for which Jem gave him an eye as black as his father's shop afterwards, for Jem could use his fists if he could not learn by heart.

But at the time he could not even compose himself enough to count down the line of boys and calculate what question would come to him. I did, and when he found he had only got the First Commandment, he was more at ease, and though the second, which fell to me, is much longer, I was not in the least afraid of forgetting it, for I could have done the whole of my duty to my neighbour if it had been necessary.

Jem got through very well, and I could hear my mother blessing him over the top of the pew behind our backs; but just as he finished, no less than three bees, who had been hovering over the heads of the workhouse boys opposite, all settled down together on Isaac Irvine's bare hand.

At the public catechising, which came once a year, and after the second lesson at evening prayer, the grown-up members of the congregation used to draw near to the end of their pews to see and hear how we acquitted ourselves, and, as it happened on this particular occasion, Master Isaac was standing exactly opposite to me. As he leaned forward, his hands crossed on the pew-top before him, I had been a good deal fascinated by his face, which was a very noble one in its rugged way, with snow-white hair and intense, keenly observing eyes, and when I saw the three bees settle on him without his seeming to notice it, I cried, "They'll sting you!" before I thought of what I was doing; for I had been severely stung that week myself, and knew what it felt like, and how little good powder-blue does.

With attending to the bees I had not heard the parson say, "Second Commandment?" and as he was rather deaf he did not hear what I said. But of course he knew it was not long enough for the right answer, and he said, "Speak up, my boy," and Jem tried to start me by whispering, "Thou shalt not make to thyself"—but the three bees went on sitting on Master Isaac's hand, and though I began the Second Commandment, I could not take my eyes off them, and when Master Isaac saw this he smiled and

nodded his white head, and said, "Never you mind me, sir. They won't sting the old beekeeper." This assertion so completely turned my head that every other idea went out of it, and after saying "or in the earth beneath" three times, and getting no further, the parson called out, "Third Commandment?" and I was passed over—"out of respect to the family," as I was reminded for a twelvemonth afterwards—and Jem pinched my leg to comfort me, and my mother sank down on the seat, and did not take her face out of her pocket-handkerchief till the workhouse boys were saying "the sacraments."

My mother was our only teacher till Jem was nine and I was eight years old. We had a thin, soft-backed reading book, bound in black cloth, on the cover of which in gold letters was its name, *Chick-seed without Chick-weed;* and in this book she wrote our names, and the date at the end of each lesson we conned fairly through. I had got into Part II., which was "in words of four letters," and had the chapter about the Ship in it, before Jem's name figured at the end of the chapter about the Dog in Part I.

My mother was very glad that this chapter seemed to please Jem, and that he learned to read it quickly, for, good-natured as he was, Jem was too fond of fighting and laying about him: and though it was only

"in words of three letters," this brief chapter contained a terrible story, and an excellent moral, which I remember well even now.

It was called "The Dog."

"Why do you cry? The Dog has bit my leg. Why did he do so? I had my bat and I hit him as he lay on the mat, so he ran at me and bit my leg. Ah, you may not use the bat if you hit the Dog. It is a hot day, and the Dog may go mad. One day a Dog bit a boy in the arm, and the boy had his arm cut off, for the Dog was mad. And did the boy die? Yes, he did die in a day or two. It is not fit to hit a Dog if he lie on the mat and is not a bad Dog. Do not hit a Dog, or a cat, or a boy."

Jem not only got through this lesson much better than usual, but he lingered at my mother's knees, to point with his own little stumpy forefinger to each recurrence of the words "hit a Dog," and read them all by himself.

"*Very* good boy," said Mother, who was much pleased. "And now read this last sentence once more, and very nicely."

"Do—not—hit—a—dog—or—a—cat—or—a—boy," read Jem in a high sing-song, and with a face of blank indifference, and then with a hasty dog's-ear he turned back to the previous page, and spelled out, "I had my bat and I hit him as he lay on the mat" so

well, that my mother caught him to her bosom and covered him with kisses.

"He'll be as good a scholar as Jack yet!" she exclaimed. "But don't forget, my darling, that my Jem must never 'hit a dog, or a cat, or a boy.' Now, love, you may put the book away."

Jem stuck out his lips and looked down, and hesitated. He seemed almost disposed to go on with his lessons. But he changed his mind, and shutting the book with a bang, he scampered off. As he passed the ottoman near the door, he saw Kitty, our old tortoise-shell puss, lying on it, and (moved perhaps by the occurrence of the word *cat* in the last sentence of the lesson) he gave her such a whack with the flat side of *Chick-seed* that she bounced up into the air like a sky-rocket, Jem crying out as he did so, "I had my bat, and I hit him as he lay on the mat."

It was seldom enough that Jem got anything by heart, but he had certainly learned this; for when an hour later I went to look for him in the garden, I found him panting with the exertion of having laid my nice, thick, fresh green crop of mustard and cress flat with the back of the coal-shovel, which he could barely lift, but with which he was still battering my salad-bed, chanting triumphantly at every stroke, "I had my bat, and I hit him as he lay on the mat."

He was quite out of breath, and I had not much difficulty in pummelling him as he deserved.

Which shows how true it is, as my dear mother said, that "you never know what to do for the best in bringing up boys."

Just about the time that we outgrew *Chick-seed*, and that it was allowed on all hands that even for quiet country-folk with no learned notions it was high time we were sent to school, our parents were spared the trouble of looking out for a school for us by the fact that a school came to us instead, and nothing less than an "Academy" was opened within three-quarters of a mile of my father's gate.

Walnut-tree Farm was an old house that stood some little way from the road in our favourite lane —a lane full of wild roses and speedwell, with a tiny footpath of disjointed flags like an old pack-horse track. Grass and milfoil grew thickly between the stones, and the turf stretched half-way over the road from each side, for there was little traffic in the lane, beyond the yearly rumble of the harvesting waggons; and few foot-passengers, except a labourer now and then, a pair or two of rustic lovers at sundown, a few knots of children in the blackberry season, and the cows coming home to milking.

Jem and I played there a good deal, but then we lived close by.

We were very fond of the old place and there were two good reasons for the charm it had in our eyes. In the first place, the old man who lived alone in it (for it had ceased to be the dwelling-house of a real farm) was an eccentric old miser, the chief object of whose existence seemed to be to thwart any attempt to pry into the daily details of it. What manner of stimulus this was to boyish curiosity needs no explanation, much as it needs excuse.

In the second place, Walnut-tree Farm was so utterly different from the house which was our home, that everything about it was attractive from mere unaccustomedness.

Our house had been rebuilt from the foundations by my father. It was square-built and very ugly, but it was in such excellent repair that one could never indulge a more lawless fancy towards any chink or cranny about it than a desire to "point" the same with a bit of mortar.

Why it was that my ancestor, who built the old house, and who was not a bit better educated or farther-travelled than my father, had built a pretty one, whilst my father built an ugly one, is one of the many things I do not know, and wish I did.

From the old sketches of it which my grandfather painted on the parlour handscreens, I think it must have been like a larger edition of the farm; that is,

with long mullioned windows, a broad and gracefully proportioned doorway with several shallow steps and quaintly-ornamented lintel; bits of fine work and ornamentation about the woodwork here and there, put in as if they had been done, not for the look of the thing, but for the love of it, and whitewash over the house-front, and over the apple-trees in the orchard.

That was what our ancestor's home was like; and it was the sort of house that became Walnut-tree Academy, where Jem and I went to school.

CHAPTER II.

Sable:—"Ha, you! A little more upon the dismal (*forming their countenances*); this fellow has a good mortal look, place him near the corpse; that wainscoat face must be o' top of the stairs; that fellow's almost in a fright (that looks as if he were full of some strange misery) at the end of the hall. So—but I'll fix you all myself. Let's have no laughing now on any provocation."—*The Funeral*, STEELE.

AT one time I really hoped to make the acquaintance of the old miser of Walnut-tree Farm. It was when we saved the life of his cat.

He was very fond of that cat, I think, and it was, to say the least of it, as eccentric-looking as its master. One eye was yellow and the other was blue, which gave it a strange, uncanny expression, and its rust-coloured fur was not common either as to tint or markings.

How dear old Jem did belabour the boy we found torturing it! He was much older and bigger than we were, but we were two to one, which we reckoned fair enough, considering his size, and that the cat had to be saved somehow. The poor thing's

forepaws were so much hurt that it could not walk, so we carried it to the farm, and I stood on the shallow doorsteps, and under the dial, on which was written—

"Tempora mutantur!"—

and the old miser came out, and we told him about the cat, and he took it and said we were good boys, and I hoped he would have asked us to go in, but he did not, though we lingered a little; he only put his hand into his pocket, and very slowly brought out sixpence.

"No, thank you," said I, rather indignantly. "We don't want anything for saving the poor cat."

"I am very fond of it," he said apologetically, and putting the sixpence carefully back; but I believe he alluded to the cat.

I felt more and more strongly that he ought to invite us into the parlour—if there was a parlour—and I took advantage of a backward movement on his part to move one shallow step nearer, and said, in an easy conversational tone, "Your cat has very curious eyes."

He came out again, and his own eyes glared in the evening light as he touched me with one of his fingers in a way that made me shiver, and said, "If I had been an old woman, and that cat had lived with me in the days when this house was built, I should

have been hanged, or burned as a witch. Twelve men would have done it—twelve reasonable and respectable men!" He paused, looking over my head at the sky, and then added, "But in all good conscience—mind, in all good conscience!"

And after another pause he touched me again (this time my teeth chattered), and whispered loudly in my ear, "Never serve on a jury!" After which he banged the door in our faces, and Jem caught hold of my jacket and cried, "Oh! he's quite mad, he'll murder us!" and we took each other by the hand and ran home as fast as our feet would carry us.

We never saw the old miser again, for he died some months afterwards, and, strange to relate, Jem and I were invited to the funeral.

It was a funeral not to be forgotten. The old man had left the money for it, and a memorandum, with the minutest directions, in the hands of his lawyer. If he had wished to be more popular after his death than he had been in his lifetime, he could not have hit upon any better plan to conciliate in a lump the approbation of his neighbours than that of providing for what undertakers call "a first-class funeral." The good custom of honouring the departed, and committing their bodies to the earth with care and respect, was carried, in our old-fashioned neighbourhood, to a point at which what began in

reverence ended in what was barely decent, and what was meant to be most melancholy became absolutely comical. But a sense of the congruous and the incongruous was not cultivated amongst us, whereas solid value (in size, quantity and expense) was perhaps over-estimated. So our furniture, our festivities, and our funerals bore witness.

No one had ever seen the old miser's furniture, and he gave no festivities; but he made up for it in his funeral.

Children, like other uneducated classes, enjoy domestic details, and going over the ins and outs of other people's affairs behind their backs; especially when the interest is heightened by a touch of gloom, or perfected by the addition of some personal importance in the matter. Jem and I were always fond of funerals, but this funeral, and the fuss that it made in the parish, we were never likely to forget.

Even our own household was so demoralized by the grim gossip of the occasion that Jem and I were accused of being unable to amuse ourselves, and of listening to our elders. It was perhaps fortunate for us that a favourite puppy died the day before the funeral, and gave us the opportunity of burying him.

> "As if our whole vocation
> Were endless imitation——"

Jem and I had already laid our gardens waste, and built a rude wall of broken bricks round them to make a churchyard; and I can clearly remember that we had so far profited by what we had overheard among our elders, that I had caught up some phrases which I was rather proud of displaying, and that I quite overawed Jem by the air with which I spoke of "the melancholy occasion"—the "wishes of deceased"—and the "feelings of survivors" when we buried the puppy.

It was understood that I could not attend the puppy's funeral in my proper person, because I wished to be the undertaker; but the happy thought struck me of putting my wheelbarrow alongside of the brick wall with a note inside it to the effect that I had "sent my carriage as a mark of respect."

In one point we could not emulate the real funeral: that was carried out "regardless of expense." The old miser had left a long list of the names of the people who were to be invited to it and to its attendant feast, in which was not only my father's name, but Jem's and mine. Three yards was the correct length of the black silk scarves which it was the custom in the neighbourhood to send to dead people's friends; but the old miser's funeral-scarves were a whole yard longer, and of such stiffly ribbed silk that Mr. Soot, the mourning draper, assured my

mother that "it would stand of itself." The black gloves cost six shillings a pair, and the sponge-cakes, which used to be sent with the gloves and scarves, were on this occasion ornamented with weeping willows in white sugar.

Jem and I enjoyed the cake, but the pride we felt in our scarves and gloves was simply boundless. What pleased us particularly was that our funeral finery was not enclosed with my father's. Mr. Soot's man delivered three separate envelopes at the door, and they looked like letters from some bereaved giant. The envelopes were twenty inches by fourteen, and made of cartridge-paper; the black border was two inches deep, and the black seals must have consumed a stick of sealing-wax among them. They contained the gloves and the scarves, which were lightly gathered together in the middle with knots of black gauze ribbon.

How exquisitely absurd Jem and I must have looked with four yards of stiff black silk attached to our little hats I can imagine, if I cannot clearly remember. My dear mother dressed us and saw us off (for, with some curious relic of pre-civilized notions, women were not allowed to appear at funerals), and I do not think she perceived anything odd in our appearance. She was very gentle, and approved of everything that was considered right by the people

she was used to, and she had only two anxieties about our scarves: first, that they should show the full four yards of respect to the memory of the deceased; and secondly, that we should keep them out of the dust, so that they might "come in useful afterwards."

She fretted a little because she had not thought of changing our gloves for smaller sizes (they were eight and a quarter); but my father "pish"ed and "pshaw"ed, and said it was better than if they had been too small, and that we should be sure to be late if my mother went on fidgeting. So we pulled them on—with ease—and picked up the tails of our hat-bands—with difficulty—and followed my father, our hearts beating with pride, and my mother and the maids watching us from the door. We arrived quite half-an-hour earlier than we need have done, but the lane was already crowded with complimentary carriages, and curious bystanders, before whom we held our heads and hatbands up; and the scent of the wild roses was lost for that day in an all-pervading atmosphere of black dye. We were very tired, I remember, by the time that our turn came to be put into a carriage by Mr. Soot, who murmured—"Pocket-handkerchiefs, gentlemen"—and, following the example of a very pale-faced stranger who was with us, we drew out the clean handkerchiefs with which our

mother had supplied us, and covered our faces with them.

At least Jem says he shut *his* eyes tight, and kept his face covered the whole way, but he always *was* so conscientious! I held my handkerchief as well as I could with my gloves; but I contrived to peep from behind it, and to see the crowd that lined the road to watch us as we wound slowly on.

If these outsiders, who only saw the procession and the funeral, were moved almost to enthusiasm by the miser's post-mortem liberality, it may be believed that the guests who were bidden to the feast did not fail to obey the ancient precept, and speak well of the dead. The tables (they were rickety) literally groaned under the weight of eatables and drinkables, and the dinner was so prolonged that Jem and I got terribly tired, in spite of the fun of watching the faces of the men we did not know, to see which got the reddest.

My father wanted us to go home before the reading of the will, which took place in the front parlour; but the lawyer said, "I think the young gentlemen should remain," for which we were very much obliged to him; though the pale-faced man said quite crossly—"Is there any special reason for crowding the room with children, who are not even relatives of the deceased?" which made us feel so much ashamed that I think we should have slipped out by ourselves;

but the lawyer, who made no answer, pushed us gently before him to the top of the room, which was soon far too full to get out of by the door.

It was very damp and musty. In several places the paper hung in great strips from the walls, and the oddest part of all was that every article of furniture in the room, and even the hearthrug, was covered with sheets of newspaper pinned over to preserve it. I sat in the corner of a sofa, where I could read the trial of a man who murdered somebody twenty-five years before, but I never got to the end of it, for it went on behind a very fat man who sat next to me, and he leaned back all the time and hid it. Jem sat on a little footstool, and fell asleep with his head on my knee, and did not wake till I nudged him, when our names were read out in the will. Even then he only half awoke, and the fat man drove his elbow into me and hurt me dreadfully for whispering in Jem's ear that the old miser had left us ten pounds apiece, for having saved the life of his cat.

I do not think any of the strangers (they were distant connections of the old man; he had no near relations) had liked our being there; and the lawyer, who was very kind, had had to tell them several times over that we really had been invited to the funeral. After our legacies were known about they were so cross that we managed to scramble through the

window, and wandered round the garden. As we sat under the trees we could hear high words within, and by and by all the men came out and talked in angry groups about the will. For when all was said and done, it appeared that the old miser had not left a penny to any one of the funeral party but Jem and me, and that he had left Walnut-tree Farm to a certain Mrs. Wood, of whom nobody knew anything.

"The wording is so peculiar," the fat man said to the pale-faced man and a third who had come out with them; "'left to her as a sign of sympathy, if not an act of reparation.' He must have known whether he owed her any reparation or not, if he were in his senses."

"Exactly. If he were in his senses," said the third man.

"Where's the money?—that's what I say," said the pale-faced man.

"Exactly, sir. That's what *I* say, too," said the fat man.

"There are only two fields, besides the house," said the third. "He must have had money, and the lawyer knows of no investments of any kind, he says."

"Perhaps he has left it to his cat," he added, looking very nastily at Jem and me.

"It's oddly put, too," murmured the pale-faced

relation. "The two fields, the house and furniture, and everything of every sort therein contained." And the lawyer coming up at that moment, he went slowly back into the house, looking about him as he went, as if he had lost something.

As the lawyer approached, the fat man got very red in the face.

"He was as mad as a hatter, sir," he said, "and we shall dispute the will."

"I think you will be wrong," said the lawyer, blandly. "He was eccentric, my dear sir, very eccentric; but eccentricity is not insanity, and you will find that the will will stand."

Jem and I were sitting on an old garden-seat, but the men had talked without paying any attention to us. At this moment Jem, who had left me a minute or two before, came running back and said: "Jack! Do come and look in at the parlour window. That man with the white face is peeping everywhere, and under all the newspapers, and he's made himself so dusty! It's such fun!"

Too happy at the prospect of anything in the shape of fun, I followed Jem on tiptoe, and when we stood by the open window with our hands over our mouths to keep us from laughing, the pale-faced man was just struggling with the inside lids of an old japanned tea-caddy.

He did not see us, he was too busy, and he did not hear us, for he was talking to himself, and we heard him say, "Everything of every sort therein contained."

I suppose the lawyer was right, and that the fat man was convinced of it, for neither he nor any one else disputed the old miser's will. Jem and I each opened an account in the Savings Bank, and Mrs. Wood came into possession of the place.

Public opinion went up and down a good deal about the old miser still. When it leaked out that he had worded the invitation to his funeral to the effect that, being quite unable to tolerate the follies of his fellow-creatures, and the antics and absurdities which were necessary to entertain them, he had much pleasure in welcoming his neighbours to a feast, at which he could not reasonably be expected to preside —everybody who heard it agreed that he must have been mad.

But it was a long sentence to remember, and not a very easy one to understand, and those who saw the plumes and the procession, and those who had a talk with the undertaker, and those who got a yard more than usual of such very good black silk, and those who were able to remember what they had had for dinner, were all charitably inclined to believe that the old man's heart had not been far from being in

the right place, at whatever angle his head had been set on.

And then by degrees curiosity moved to Mrs. Wood. Who was she? What was she like? What was she to the miser? Would she live at the farm?

To some of these questions the carrier, who was the first to see her, replied. She was "a quiet, genteel-looking sort of a grey-haired widow lady, who looked as if she'd seen a deal of trouble, and was badly off."

The neighbourhood was not unkindly, and many folk were ready to be civil to the widow if she came to live there.

"But she never will," everybody said. "She must let it. Perhaps the new doctor might think of it at a low rent, he'd be glad of the field for his horse. What could she do with an old place like that, and not a penny to keep it up with?"

What she did do was to have a school there, and that was how Walnut-tree Farm became Walnut-tree Academy.

CHAPTER III.

"What are little boys made of, made of?
What are little boys made of?"

Nursery Rhyme.

When the school was opened, Jem and I were sent there at once. Everybody said it was "time we were sent somewhere," and that "we were getting too wild for home."

I got so tired of hearing this at last, that one day I was goaded to reply that "home was getting too tame for me." And Jem, who always backed me up, said, "And me too." For which piece of swagger we forfeited our suppers; but when we went to bed we found pieces of cake under our pillows, for my mother could not bear us to be short of food, however badly we behaved.

I do not know whether the trousers had anything to do with it, but about the time that Jem and I were put into trousers we lived in a chronic state of behaving badly. What makes me feel particularly ashamed in thinking of it is, that I know it was not

that we came under the pressure of any overwhelming temptations to misbehave and yielded through weakness, but that, according to an expressive nursery formula, we were "seeing how naughty we could be." I think we were genuinely anxious to see this undesirable climax; in some measure as a matter of experiment, to which all boys are prone, and in which dangerous experiments, and experiments likely to be followed by explosion, are naturally preferred. Partly, too, from an irresistible impulse to "raise a row," and take one's luck of the results. This craving to disturb the calm current of events, and the good conduct and composure of one's neighbours as a matter of diversion, must be incomprehensible by phlegmatic people, who never feel it, whilst some Irishmen, I fancy, never quite conquer it, perhaps because they never quite cease to be boys. In any degree I do not for an instant excuse it, and in excess it must be simply intolerable by better-regulated minds.

But really, boys who are pickles should be put into jars with sound stoppers, like other pickles, and I wonder that mothers and cooks do not get pots like those that held the forty thieves, and do it.

I fancy it was because we happened to be in this rough, defiant, mischievous mood, just about the time that Mrs. Wood opened her school, that we did

not particularly like our school-mistress. If I had been fifteen years older, I should soon have got beyond the first impression created by her severe dress, close widow's cap and straight grey hair, and have discovered that the outline of her face was absolutely beautiful, and I might possibly have detected, what most people failed to detect, that an odd unpleasing effect, caused by the contrast between her general style, and an occasional lightness and rapidity and grace of movement in her slender figure, came from the fact that she was much younger than she looked and affected to be. The impression I did receive of her appearance I communicated to my mother in far from respectful pantomime.

"Well, love, and what do you think of Mrs. Wood?" said she.

"I think," chanted I, in that high brassy pitch of voice which Jem and I had adopted for this bravado period of our existence—"I think she's like our old white hen that turned up its eyes and died of the pip. Lack-a-daisy-dee! Lack-a-daisy-dee!"

And I twisted my body about, and strolled up and down the room with a supposed travesty of Mrs. Wood's movements.

"So she is," said faithful Jem. "Lack-a-daisy-dee! Lack-a-daisy-dee!" and he wriggled about

after me, and knocked over the Berlin wool-basket.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" said our poor mother.

Jem righted the basket, and I took a run and a flying leap over it, and having cleared it successfully, took another, and yet another, each one soothing my feelings to the extent by which it shocked my mother's. At the third bound, Jem, not to be behindhand, uttered a piercing yell from behind the sofa.

"Good gracious, what's the matter?" cried my mother.

"It's the war-whoop of the Objibeway Indians," I promptly explained, and having emitted another, to which I flattered myself Jem's had been as nothing for hideousness, we departed in file to raise a row in the kitchen.

Summer passed into autumn. Jem and I really liked going to school, but it was against our principles at that time to allow that we liked anything that we ought to like.

Some sincere but mistaken efforts to improve our principles were made, I remember, by a middle-aged single lady, who had known my mother in her girlhood, and who was visiting her at this unlucky stage of our career. Having failed to cope with us directly, she adopted the plan of talking improvingly to our mother and at us, and very severe some of her

remarks were, and I don't believe that Mother liked them any better than we did.

The severest she ever made were I think heightened in their severity by the idea that we were paying unusual attention, as we sat on the floor a little behind her one day. We were paying a great deal of attention, but it was not so much to Miss Martin as to a stock of wood-lice which I had collected, and which I was arranging on the carpet that Jem might see how they roll themselves into smooth tight balls when you tease them. But at last she talked so that we could not help attending. I dared not say anything to her, but her own tactics were available. I put the wood-lice back in my pocket, and stretching my arms yawningly above my head, I said to Jem, "How dull it is! I wish I were a bandit."

Jem generally outdid me if possible, from sheer willingness and loyalty of spirit.

"*I* should like to be a burglar," said he.

And then we both left the room very quietly and politely. But when we got outside I said, "I hate that woman."

"So do I," said Jem; "she regularly hectors over mother—I hate her worst for that."

"So do I. Jem, doesn't she take pills?"

"I don't know—why?"

"I believe she does; I'm certain I saw a box on her dressing-table. Jem, run like a good chap and see, and if there is one, empty out the pills and bring me the pill-box."

Jem obeyed, and I sat down on the stairs and began to get the wood-lice out again. There were twelve nice little black balls in my hand when Jem came back with the pill-box.

"Hooray!" I cried; "but knock out all the powder, it might smother them. Now, give it to me."

Jem danced with delight when I put the wood-lice in and put on the lid.

"I hope she'll shake the box before she opens it," I said, as we replaced it on the dressing-table.

"I hope she will, or they won't be tight. Oh, Jack! Jack! *How many do you suppose she takes at a time?*"

We never knew, and what is more, we never knew what became of the wood-lice, for, for some reason, she kept our counsel as well as her own about the pill-box.

One thing that helped to reconcile us to spending a good share of our summer days in Walnut-tree Academy was that the school-mistress made us very comfortable. Boys at our age are not very sensitive about matters of taste and colour and so forth, but

even we discovered that Mrs. Wood had that knack of adapting rooms to their inhabitants, and making them pleasant to the eye, which seems to be a trick at the end of some people's fingers, and quite unlearnable by others. When she had made the old miser's rooms to her mind, we might have understood, if we had speculated about it, how it was that she had not profited by my mother's sound advice to send all his "rubbishy odds and ends" (the irregularity and ricketiness and dustiness of which made my mother shudder) to be "sold at the nearest auction-rooms, and buy some good solid furniture of the cabinet-maker who furnished for everybody in the neighbourhood, which would be the cheapest in the long-run, besides making the rooms look like other people's at last." That she evaded similar recommendations of paper-hangers and upholsterers, and of wall-papers and carpets, and curtains with patterns that would "stand," and wear best, and show dirt least, was a trifle in the eyes of all good housekeepers, when our farming-man's daughter brought the amazing news with her to Sunday tea, that "the missus" had had in old Sally, and had torn the paper off the parlour, and had made Sally "lime-wash the walls, for all the world as if it was a cellar." Moreover, she had "gone over" the lower part herself, and was now painting on the top of that. There was nothing for it, after this news, but to sigh

and conclude that there was something about the old place which made everybody a little queer who came to live in it.

But when Jem and I saw the parlour (which was now the school-room), we decided that it "looked very nice," and was "uncommonly comfortable." The change was certainly amazing, and made the funeral day seem longer ago than it really was. The walls were not literally lime-washed; but (which is the same thing, except for a little glue!) they were distempered, a soft pale pea-green. About a yard deep above the wainscot this was covered with a dark sombre green tint, and along the upper edge of this, as a border all round the room, the school-mistress had painted a trailing wreath of white periwinkle. The border was painted with the same materials as the walls, and with very rapid touches. The white flowers were skilfully relieved by the dark ground, and the varied tints of the leaves, from the deep evergreen of the old ones to the pale yellow of the young shoots, had demanded no new colours, and were wonderfully life-like and pretty. There was another border, right round the top of the room; but that was painted on paper and fastened on. It was a Bible text—"Keep Innocency, and take heed to the thing that is right, for that shall bring a man Peace at the last." And Mrs. Wood had done the text also.

There were no curtains to the broad, mullioned window, which was kept wide open at every lattice; and one long shoot of ivy that had pushed in farther than the rest had been seized, and pinned to the wall inside, where its growth was a subject of study and calculation, during the many moments when we were "trying to see" how little we could learn of our lessons. The black-board stood on a polished easel; but the low seats and desks were of plain pine like the floor, and they were scrupulously scrubbed. The cool tint of the walls was somewhat cheered by coloured maps and prints, and the school-mistress's chair (an old carved oak one that had been much revived by bees-wax and turpentine since the miser's days) stood on the left-hand side of the window—under "Keep Innocency," and looking towards "Peace at the last." I know, for when we were all writing or something of that sort, so that she could sit still, she used to sit with her hands folded and look up at it, which was what made Jem and me think of the old white hen that turned up its eyes; and made Horace Simpson say that he believed she had done one of the letters wrong, and could not help looking at it to see if it showed. And by the school-mistress's chair was the lame boy's sofa. It was the very old sofa covered with newspapers on which I had read about the murder, when the lawyer was reading the

will. But she had taken off the paper, and covered it with turkey red, and red cushions, and a quilt of brown holland and red bordering, to hide his crumpled legs, so that he looked quite comfortable.

I remember so well the first day that he came. His father was a parson on the moors, and this boy had always wanted to go to school in spite of his infirmity, and at last his father brought him in a light cart down from the moors, to look at it; and when he got him out of the cart, he carried him in. He was a big man, I remember, with grey hair and bent shoulders, and a very old coat, for it split a little at one of the seams as he was carrying him in, and we laughed.

When they got into the room, he put the boy down, keeping his arm round him, and wiped his face and said—"How deliciously cool!"—and the boy stared all round with his great eyes, and then he lifted them to his father's face and said—"I'll come here. I do like it. But not to-day, my back is so bad."

And what makes me know that Horace was wrong, and that Mrs. Wood had made no mistake about the letters of the text, is that "Cripple Charlie" —as we called him—could see it so well with lying down. And he told me one day that when his back was very bad, and he got the fidgets and could not

keep still, he used to fix his eyes on "Peace," which had gold round the letters, and shone, and that if he could keep steadily to it, for a good bit, he always fell asleep at the last. But he was very fanciful, poor chap!

I do not think it was because Jem and I had any real wish to become burglars that we made a raid on the walnuts that autumn. I do not even think that we cared very much about the walnuts themselves.

But when it is understood that the raid was to be a raid by night, or rather in those very early hours of the morning which real burglars are said almost to prefer; that it was necessary to provide ourselves with thick sticks; that we should have to force the hedge and climb the trees; that the said trees grew directly under the owner's bedroom window, which made the chances of detection hazardously great; and that walnut juice (as I have mentioned before) is of a peculiarly unaccommodating nature, since it will neither disguise you at the time nor wash off afterwards—it will be obvious that the dangers and delights of the adventure were sufficient to blunt, for the moment, our sense of the fact that we were deliberately going a-thieving.

"Shall we wear black masks?" said Jem.

On the whole I said "No," for I did not know where we should get them, nor, if we did, how we should keep them on.

"If she has a blunderbuss, and fires," said I, "you must duck your head, remember; but if she springs the rattle we must cut and run."

"Will her blunderbuss be loaded, do you think?" asked Jem. "Mother says the one in *their* room isn't; she told me so on Saturday. But she says we're never to touch it, all the same, for you never can be sure about things of that sort going off. Do you think Mrs. Wood's will be loaded?"

"It may be," said I, "and of course she might load it if she thought she heard robbers."

"I heard father say that if you shoot a burglar outside it's murder," said Jem, who seemed rather troubled by the thought of the blunderbuss; "but if you shoot him inside it's self-defence."

"Well, you may spring a rattle outside, anyway," said I; "and if hers makes as much noise as ours, it'll be heard all the way here. So mind, if she begins, you must jump down and cut home like mad."

Armed with these instructions and our thick sticks, Jem and I crept out of the house before the sun was up or a bird awake. The air seemed cold after our warm beds, and the dew was so drenching in the hedge bottoms, and on the wayside weeds of our favourite lane, that we were soaked to the knees before we began to force the hedge. I did not think that grass and wild-flowers could have held so much

wet. By the time that we had crossed the orchard, and I was preparing to grip the grandly scored trunk of the nearest walnut-tree with my chilly legs, the heavy peeling, the hard cracking, and the tedious picking of a green walnut was as little pleasurable a notion as I had in my brain.

All the same, I said (as firmly as my chattering teeth would allow) that I was very glad we had come when we did, for that there certainly were fewer walnuts on the tree than there had been the day before.

"She's been at them," said I, almost indignantly.

"Pickling," responded Jem with gloomy conciseness; and spurred by this discovery to fresh enthusiasm for our exploit, we promptly planned operations.

"I'll go up the tree," said I, "and beat, and you can pick them as they fall."

Jem was, I fear, only too well accustomed to my arrogating the first place in our joint undertakings, and after giving me "a leg up" to an available bit of foothold, and handing up my stick, he waited patiently below to gather what I beat down.

The walnuts were few and far between, to say nothing of leaves between, which in walnut-trees are large. The morning twilight was dim, my hands were cold and feebler than my resolution. I had battered

down a lot of leaves and twigs, and two or three walnuts; the sun had got up at last, but rather slowly, as if he found the morning chillier than he expected, and a few rays were darting here and there across the lane, when Jem gave a warning "Hush!" and I left off rustling in time to hear Mrs. Wood's bedroom lattice opened, and to catch sight of something pushed out into the morning mists.

"Who's there?" said the school-mistress.

Neither Jem nor I took upon us to inform her, and we were both seized with anxiety to know what was at the window. He was too low down and I too much buried in foliage to see clearly. Was it the rattle? I took a hasty step downwards at the thought. Or was it the blunderbuss? In my sudden move I slipped on the dew-damped branch, and cracked a rotten one with my elbow, which made an appalling crash in the early stillness, and sent a walnut—pop! on to Jem's hat, who had already ducked to avoid the fire of the blunderbuss, and now fell on his face under the fullest conviction that he had been shot.

"Who's there?" said the school-mistress, and (my tumble having brought me into a more exposed position) she added, "Is that you, Jack and Jem?"

"It's me," said I, ungrammatically but stoutly, hoping that Jem at any rate would slip off.

But he had recovered himself and his loyalty, and unhesitatingly announced, "No, it's me," and was picking the bits of grass off his cheeks and knees when I got down beside him.

"I'm sorry you came to take my walnuts like this," said the voice from above. She had a particularly clear one, and we could hear it quite well. "I got a basketful on purpose for you yesterday afternoon. If I let it down by a string, do you think you can take it?"

Happily she did not wait for a reply, as we could not have got a word out between us; but by and by the basketful of walnuts was pushed through the lattice and began to descend. It came slowly and unsteadily, and we had abundant leisure to watch it, and also, as we looked up, to discover what it was that had so puzzled me in Mrs. Wood's appearance—that when I first discovered that it was a head and not a blunderbuss at the window I had not recognized it for hers.

She was without her widow's cap, which revealed the fact that her hair, though the two narrow, smooth bands of it which appeared every day beyond her cap were unmistakably grey, was different in some essential respects from (say) Mrs. Jones's, our grey-haired washer-woman. The more you saw of Mrs. Jones's head, the less hair you perceived her to have, and the

whiter that little appeared. Indeed, the knob into which it was twisted at the back was much of the colour as well as of the size of a tangled reel of dirty white cotton. But Mrs. Wood's hair was far more abundant than our mother's, and it was darker underneath than on the top—a fact which was more obvious when the knot into which it was gathered in her neck was no longer hidden. Deep brown streaks were mingled with the grey in the twists of this, and I could see them quite well, for the outline of her head was dark against the white-washed mullion of the window, and framed by ivy-leaves. As she leaned out to lower the basket we could see her better and better, and, as it touched the ground, the jerk pulled her forward, and the knot of her hair uncoiled and rolled heavily over the window-sill.

By this time the rays of the sun were level with the windows, and shone full upon Mrs. Wood's face. I was very much absorbed in looking at her, but I could not forget our peculiar position, and I had an important question to put, which I did without more ado.

"Please, madam, shall you tell Father?"

"We only want to know," added Jem.

She hesitated a minute, and then smiled. "No; I don't think you'll do it again;" after which she disappeared.

"She's certainly no sneak," said I, with an effort to be magnanimous, for I would much rather she had sprung the rattle or fired the blunderbuss.

"And I say," said Jem, "isn't she pretty without her cap?"

We looked ruefully at the walnuts. We had lost all appetite for them, and they seemed disgustingly damp, with their green coats reeking with black bruises. But we could not have left the basket behind, so we put our sticks through the handles, and carried it like the Sunday picture of the spies carrying the grapes of Eshcol.

And Jem and I have often since agreed that we never in all our lives felt so mean as on that occasion, and we sincerely hope that we never may.

Indeed, it is only in some books and some sermons that people are divided into "the wicked" and "the good," and that "the wicked" have no consciences at all. Jem and I had wilfully gone thieving, but we were far from being utterly hardened, and the school-mistress's generosity weighed heavily upon ours. Repentance and the desire to make atonement seem to go pretty naturally together, and in my case they led to the following dialogue with Jem, on the subject of two exquisite little bantam hens and a cock, which were our joint property, and which were known in the farmyard as "the Major and his wives."

These titles (which vexed my dear mother from the first) had suggested themselves to us on this wise. There was a certain little gentleman who came to our church, a brewer by profession, and a major in the militia by choice, who was so small and strutted so much that to the insolent observation of boyhood he was "exactly like" our new bantam cock. Young people are very apt to overhear what is not intended for their knowledge, and somehow or other we learned that he was "courting" (as his third wife) a lady of our parish. His former wives are buried in our churchyard. Over the first he had raised an obelisk of marble, so costly and affectionate that it had won the hearts of his neighbours in general, and of his second wife in particular. When she died the gossips wondered whether the Major would add her name to that of her predecessor, or "go to the expense" of a new monument. He erected a second obelisk, and it was taller than the first (height had a curious fascination for him), and the inscription was more touching than the other. This time the material was Aberdeen granite, and as that is most difficult to cut, hard to polish, and heavy to transport, the expense was enormous. These two monstrosities of mortuary pomp were the pride of the parish, and they were familiarly known to us children (and to many other people) as "the Major's wives."

When we called the cock "the Major," we naturally called the hens "the Major's wives."

"My dears, I don't like that name at all," said my mother. "I never like jokes about people who are dead. And for that matter, it really sounds as if they were both alive, which is worse."

It was during our naughty period, and I strutted on my heels till I must have looked very like the little brewer himself, and said, "And why shouldn't they both be alive? Fancy the Major with two wives, one on each arm, and both as tall as the monuments! What fun!"

As I said the words "one on each arm," I put up first one and then the other of my own, and having got a satisfactory impetus during the rest of my sentence, I crossed the parlour as a catherine-wheel under my mother's nose. It was a new accomplishment, of which I was very proud, and poor Jem somewhat envious. He was clumsy and could not manage it.

"Oh!" ejaculated my mother, "Jack, I must speak to your father about those dangerous tricks of yours. And it quite shocks me to hear you talk in that light way about wicked things."

Jem was to my rescue in a moment, driving his hands into the pockets of his blouse, and turning them up to see how soon he might hope that his fingers would burst through the lining.

"Jacob had two wives," he said; and he chanted on, quoting imperfectly from Dr. Watts's *Scripture Catechism*, "And Jacob was a good man, therefore his brother hated him."

"No, no, Jem," said I, "that was Abel. Jacob was Isaac's younger son, and——"

"Hush! Hush! Hush!" said my mother. "You're not to do Sunday lessons on week-days. What terrible boys you are!" And, avoiding to fight about Jacob's wives with Jem, who was pertinacious and said very odd things, my mother did what women often do and are often wise in doing—she laid down her weapons and began to beseech.

"My darlings, call your nice little hens some other names. Poor old mother doesn't like those."

I was melted in an instant, and began to cast about in my head for new titles. But Jem was softly obstinate, and he had inherited some of my mother's wheedling ways. He took his hands from his pockets, flung his arms recklessly round her clean collar, and began stroking (or *pooring*, as we called it) her head with his grubby paws. And as he *poored* he coaxed —"Dear nice old mammy! It's only us. What can it matter? Do let us call our bantams what we like."

And my mother gave in before I had time to.

The dialogue I held with Jem about the bantams after the walnut raid was as follows:

"Jem, you're awfully fond of the 'Major and his wives,' I suppose?"

"Ye-es," said Jem, "*I am.* But I don't mind, Jack, if you want them for your very own. I'll give up my share,"—and he sighed.

"I never saw such a good chap as you are, Jem. But it's not that. I thought we might give them to Mrs. Wood. It was so beastly about those disgusting walnuts."

"I can't touch walnut pickle now," said Jem, feelingly.

"It'd be a very handsome present," said I.

"They took a prize at the Agricultural," said Jem.

"I know she likes eggs. She beats 'em into a froth and feeds Charlie with 'em," said I.

"I think I could eat walnut pickle again if I knew she had the bantams," sighed Jem, who was really devoted to the little cock-major and the auburn-feathered hens.

"We'll take 'em this afternoon," I said.

We did so—in a basket, Eshcol-grape-wise, like the walnuts. When we told Mother, she made no objection. She would have given her own head off her shoulders if, by ill-luck, any passer-by had thought of asking for it. Besides, it solved the difficulty of the objectionable names.

Mrs. Wood was very loth to take our bantams,

but of course Jem and I were not going to recall a gift, so she took them at last, and I think she was very much pleased with them.

She had got her cap on again, tied under her chin, and nothing to be seen of her hair but the very grey piece in front. It made her look so different that I could not keep my eyes off her whilst she was talking, though I knew quite well how rude it is to stare. And my head got so full of it that I said at last, in spite of myself, "Please, madam, why is it that part of your hair is grey and part of it dark?"

Her face got rather red, she did not answer for a minute; and Jem, to my great relief, changed the subject, by saying, "We were very much obliged to you for not telling Father about the walnuts."

Mrs. Wood leaned back against the high carving of her old chair and smiled, and said very slowly, "Would he have been very angry?"

"He'd have flogged us, I expect," said I.

"And I expect," continued Jem, "that he'd have said to us what he said to Bob Furniss when he took the filberts: 'If you begin by stealing nuts, you'll end by being transported.' Do you think Jack and I shall end by being transported?" added Jem, who had a merciless talent for applying general principles to individual cases.

Mrs. Wood made no reply, neither did she move,

but her eyelids fell, and then her eyes looked far worse than if they had been shut, for there was a little bit open, with nothing but white to be seen. She was still rather red, and she did not visibly breathe. I have no idea for how many seconds I had gazed stupidly at her, when Jem gasped, "Is she dead?"

Then I became terror-struck, and crying, "Let's find Mary Anne!" fled into the kitchen, closely followed by Jem.

"She's took with them fits occasional," said Mary Anne, and depositing a dripping tin she ran to the parlour. We followed in time to see her stooping over the chair and speaking very loudly in the school-mistress's ear,

"I'll lay ye down, ma'am, shall I?"

But still the widow was silent, on which Mary Anne took her up in her brawny arms, and laid her on "Cripple Charlie's" sofa, and covered her with the quilt.

We settled the Major and his wives into their new abode, and then hurried home to my mother, who put on her bonnet, and took a bottle of something, and went off to the farm.

She did not come back till tea-time, and then she was full of poor Mrs. Wood. "Most curious attacks," she explained to my father; "she can neither move

nor speak, and yet she hears everything, though she doesn't always remember afterwards. She said she thought it was 'trouble,' poor soul!"

"What brought this one on?" said my father.

"I can't make out," said my mother. "I hope you boys did nothing to frighten her, eh? Are you sure you didn't do one of those dreadful wheels, Jack?"

This I indignantly denied, and Jem supported me.

My mother's sympathy had been so deeply enlisted, and her report was so detailed, that Jem and I became bored at last, besides resenting the notion that we had been to blame. I gave one look into the strawberry jam pot, and finding it empty, said my grace and added, "Women are a poor lot, always turning up their eyes and having fits about nothing. I know one thing, nobody 'll ever catch *me* being bothered with a wife."

"Nor me neither," said Jem.

CHAPTER IV.

"The bee, a more adventurous colonist than man."
W. C. BRYANT.

"Some silent laws our hearts will make,
Which they shall long obey;
We for the year to come may take
Our temper from to-day."—WORDSWORTH.

"YOU know what an Apiary is, Isaac, of course?"

I was sitting in the bee-master's cottage, opposite to him, in an arm-chair, which was the counterpart of his own, both of them having circular backs, diamond-shaped seats, and chintz cushions with frills. It was the summer following that in which Jem and I had tried to see how badly we could behave; this uncivilized phase had abated: Jem used to ride about a great deal with my father, and I had become intimate with Isaac Irvine.

"You know what an Apiary is, Isaac?" said I.

"A what, sir?"

"An A-P-I-A-R-Y."

"To be sure, sir, to be sure," said Isaac. "An

appyary" (so he was pleased to pronounce it), "I should be familiar with the name, sir, from my bee-book, but I never calls my own stock anything but the beehives. *Beehives* is a good straightforward sort of a name, sir, and it serves my turn."

"Ah, but you see we haven't come to the B's yet," said I, alluding to what I was thinking of.

"Does your father think of keeping 'em, sir?" said Isaac, alluding to what he was thinking of.

"Oh, he means to have them bound, I believe," was my reply.

The bee-master now betrayed his bewilderment, and we had a hearty laugh when we discovered that he had been talking about bees whilst I had been talking about the weekly numbers of the *Penny Cyclopædia*, which had not as yet reached the letter B, but in which I had found an article on Master Isaac's craft, under the word Apiary, which had greatly interested me, and ought, I thought, to be interesting to the bee-keeper. Still thinking of this I said,

"Do you ever take your bees away from home, Isaac?"

"They're on the moors now, sir," said Isaac.

"*Are* they?" I exclaimed. "Then you're like the Egyptians, and like the French, and the Piedmontese; only you didn't take them in a barge."

"Why, no, sir. The canal don't go nigh-hand of the moors at all."

"The Egyptians," said I, leaning back into the capacious arms of my chair, and epitomizing what I had read, "who live in Lower Egypt put all their beehives into boats and take them on the river to Upper Egypt. Right up at that end of the Nile the flowers come out earliest, and the bees get all the good out of them there, and then the boats are moved lower down to where the same kind of flowers are only just beginning to blossom, and the bees get all the good out of them there, and so on, and on, and on, till they've travelled right through Egypt, with all the hives piled up, and come back in the boats to where they started from."

"And every hive a mighty different weight to what it was when they did start, I'll warrant," said Master Isaac enthusiastically. "Did you find all that in those penny numbers, Master Jack?"

"Yes, and oh, lots more, Isaac! About lots of things and lots of countries."

"Scholarship's a fine thing," said the bee-master, "and seeing foreign parts is a fine thing, and many's the time I've wished for both. I suppose that's the same Egypt that's in the Bible, sir?"

"Yes," said I, "and the same river Nile that Moses was put on in the ark of bulrushes."

"There's no countries I'd like to see better than them Bible countries," said Master Isaac, "and I've wished it more ever since that gentleman was here that gave that lecture in the school, with the Holy Land magic-lantern. He'd been there himself, and he explained all the slides. They were grand, some of 'em, when you got 'em straight and steady for a bit. They're an awkward thing to manage, is slides, sir, and the school-master he wasn't much good at 'em, he said, and that young scoundrel Bob Furniss and another lad got in a hole below the platform and pulled the sheet. But when you did get 'em, right side up, and the light as it should be, they *were* grand! There was one they called the Wailing Place of the Jews, with every stone standing out as fair as the flags on this floor. John Binder, the mason, was at my elbow when that came on, and he clapped his hands, and says he, 'Well, yon beats all!' But the one for my choice, sir, was the Garden of Gethsemane by moonlight. I'd only gone to the penny places, for I'm a good size and can look over most folks' heads, but I thought I must see that a bit nearer, cost what it might. So I found a shilling, and I says to the young fellow at the door (it was the pupil-teacher), 'I must go a bit nearer to yon.' And he says, 'You're not going into the reserved seats, Isaac?' So I says, 'Don't put yourself about, my lad, I shan't interfere

with the quality; but if half a day's wage 'll bring me nearer to the Garden of Gethsemane, I'm bound to go.' And I went. I didn't intrude myself on nobody, though one gentleman was for making room for me at once, and twice over he offered me a seat beside him. But I knew my manners, and I said, 'Thank you, sir, I can see as I stand.' And I did see right well, and kicked Bob Furniss too, which was good for all parties. But I'd like to see the very places themselves, Master Jack."

"So should I," said I; "but I should like to go farther, all round the world, I think. Do you know, Isaac, you wouldn't believe what curious beasts there are in other countries, and what wonderful people and places! Why, we've only got to ATH—No. 135—now; it leaves off at *Athanagilde*, a captain of the Spanish Goths—he's nobody, but there are *such* apes in that number! The Mono—there's a picture of him, just like a man with a tail and horrid feet, who used to sit with the negro women when they were at work, and play with bits of paper; and a Quata, who used to be sent to the tavern for wine, and when the children pelted him he put down the wine and threw stones at them. And there are pictures in all the numbers, of birds and ant-eaters and antelopes, and I don't know what. The Mono and the Quata live in the West Indies, I think. You see, I think the A's are

rather good numbers; very likely, for there's America, and Asia, and Africa, and Arabia, and Abyssinia, and there'll be Australia before we come to the B's. Oh, Isaac! I do wish I could go round the world!"

I sighed, and the bee-master sighed also, with a profundity that made his chair creak, well-seasoned as it was. Then he said, "But I'll say this, Master Jack, next to going to such places the reading about 'em must come. A penny a week's a penny a week to a poor man, but I reckon I shall have to make shift to take in those numbers myself."

Isaac did not take them in, however, for I used to take ours down to his cottage, and read them aloud to him instead. He liked this much better than if he had had to read to himself—he said he could understand reading better when he heard it than when he saw it. For my own part I enjoyed it very much, and I fancy I read rather well, it being a point on which Mrs. Wood expended much trouble with us.

"Listen, Isaac," said I on my next visit; "this is what I meant about the barge"—and resting the Penny Number on the arm of my chair, I read aloud to the attentive bee-master—"'Goldsmith describes from his own observation a kind of floating apiary in some parts of France and Piedmont. They have on board of one barge, he says, threescore or a hundred beehives——'"

"That's an appy-ary if ye like, sir!" ejaculated Master Isaac, interrupting his pipe and me to make way for the observation.

"Somebody saw 'a convoy of *four thousand* hives——' on the Nile," said I.

The bee-master gave a resigned sigh. "Go on, Master Jack," said he.

"'—well defended from the inclemency of an accidental storm,'" I proceeded; "'and with these the owners float quietly down the stream; one bee-hive yields the proprietor a considerable income. Why, he adds, a method similar to this has never been adopted in England, where we have more gentle rivers and more flowery banks than in any other part of the world, I know not; certainly it might be turned to advantage, and yield the possessor a secure, though perhaps a moderate, income.'"

I was very fond of the canal which ran near us (and was, for that matter, a parish boundary): and the barges, with their cargoes, were always interesting to me; but a bargeful of bees seemed something quite out of the common. I thought I should rather like to float down a gentle river between flowery banks, surrounded by beehives on which I could rely to furnish me with a secure though moderate income; and I said so.

"So should I, sir," said the bee-master. "And I

should uncommon like to ha' seen the one beehive that brought in a considerable income. Honey must have been very dear in those parts, Master Jack. However, it's in the book, so I suppose it's right enough."

I made no defence of the veracity of the *Cyclopædia*, for I was thinking of something else, of which, after a few moments, I spoke.

"Isaac, you don't stay with your bees on the moors. Do you ever go to see them?"

"To be sure I do, Master Jack, nigh every Sunday through the season. I start after I get back from morning church, and I come home in the dark, or by moonlight. My missus goes to church in the afternoons, and for that bit she locks up the house."

"Oh, I wish you'd take me the next time!" said I.

"To be sure I will, and too glad sir, if you're allowed to go."

That *was* the difficulty, and I knew it. No one who has not lived in a household of old-fashioned middle-class country folk of our type has any notion how difficult it is for anybody to do anything unusual therein. In such a well-fitted but unelastic establishment the dinner-hour, the carriage horses, hot water, bedtime, candles, the post, the wash-day, and an extra blanket, from being the ministers of one's comfort,

become the stern arbiters of one's fate. Spring cleaning—which is something like what it would be to build, paint, and furnish a house, and to "do it at home"—takes place as naturally as the season it celebrates; but if you want the front door kept open after the usual hour for drawing the bolts and hanging the robbers' bell, it's odds if the master of the house has not an apoplectic fit, and if servants of twelve and fourteen years' standing do not give warning.

And what is difficult on week-days is on Sundays next door to impossible, for obvious reasons.

But one's parents, though they have their little ways like other people, are, as a rule—oh, my heart! made sadder and wiser by the world's rough experiences, bear witness!—very indulgent; and after a good many ups and downs, and some compromising and coaxing, I got my way.

On one point my mother was firm, and I feared this would be an insuperable difficulty. I must go twice to church, as our Sunday custom was—a custom which she saw no good reason for me to break. It is easy to smile at her punctiliousness on this score; but after all these years, and on the whole, I think she was right. An unexpected compromise came to my rescue, however: Isaac Irvine's bees were in the parish of Cripple Charlie's father, within a stone's

throw (by the bee-master's strong arm) of the church itself, which was a small minster among the moors. Here I promised faithfully to attend Evening Prayer, for which we should be in time; and I started, by Isaac Irvine's side, on my first real "expedition" on the first Sunday in August, with my mother's blessing and a threepenny-bit with a hole in it, "in case of a collection."

We dined before we started, I with the rest, and Isaac in our kitchen; but I had no great appetite—I was too much excited—and I willingly accepted some large sandwiches made with thick slices of home-made bread and liberal layers of home-made potted meat, "in case I should feel hungry" before I got there.

It pains me to think how distressed my mother was because I insisted on carrying the sandwiches in a red and orange spotted handkerchief, which I had purchased with my own pocket-money, and to which I was deeply attached, partly from the bombastic nature of the pattern, and partly because it was big enough for any grown-up man. "It made me look like a tramping sailor," she said. I did not tell her that this was precisely the effect at which I aimed, though it was the case; but I coaxed her into permitting it, and I abstained from passing a certain knowing little ash stick through the knot, and hoisting

the bundle over my left shoulder, till I was well out of the grounds.

My efforts to spare her feelings on this point, however, proved vain. She ran to the landing-window to watch me out of sight, and had a full view of my figure as I swaggered with a business-like gait by Isaac's side up the first long hill, having set my hat on the back of my head with an affectation of profuse heat, my right hand in the bee-master's coat-pocket for support, and my left holding the stick and bundle at an angle as showy and sailor-like as I could assume.

"And they'll just meet the Ebenezer folk coming out of chapel, ma'am!" said our housemaid over my mother's shoulder, by way of consolation.

Our journey was up-hill, for which I was quite prepared. The blue and purple outline of the moors formed the horizon line visible from our gardens, whose mistiness or clearness was prophetic of the coming weather, and over which the wind was supposed to blow with uncommon "healthfulness." I had been there once to blow away the whooping-cough, and I could remember that the sandy road wound up and up, but I did not appreciate till that Sunday how tiring a steady ascent of nearly five miles may be.

We were within sight of the church and within hearing of the bells, when we reached a wayside

trough, whose brimming measure was for ever overflowed by as bright a rill as ever trickled down a hill-side.

"It's only the first peal," said Master Isaac, seating himself on the sandy bank, and wiping his brows.

My well-accustomed ears confirmed his statement. The bells moved too slowly for either the second or the third peal, and we had twenty minutes at our disposal.

It was then that I knew (for the first but not the last time) what refreshment for the weary a spotted handkerchief may hold. The bee-master and I divided the sandwiches, and washed them down with handfuls of the running rill, so fresh, so cold, so limpid, that (like the saints and martyrs of a faith) it would convert any one to water-drinking who did not reflect on the commoner and less shining streams which come to us through lead pipes and in evil communication with sewers.

We were cool and tidy by the time that the little "Tom Tinkler" bell began to "hurry up."

"You're coming, aren't you?" said I, checked at the churchyard gate by an instinct of some hesitation on Isaac's part.

"Well, I suppose I am, sir," said the bee-master, and in he came.

The thick walls, the stained windows, and the stone floor, which was below the level of the churchyard, made the church very cool. Master Isaac and I seated ourselves so that we had a good view within, and could also catch a peep through the open porch of the sunlit country outside. Charlie's father was in his place when we got in; his threadbare coat was covered by the white linen of his office, and I do not think it would have been possible even to my levity to have felt anything but a respectful awe of him in church.

The cares of this life are not as a rule improving to the countenance. No one who watches faces can have failed to observe that more beauty is marred and youth curtailed by vulgar worry than by almost any other disfigurement. In the less educated classes, where self-control is not very habitual, and where interests beyond petty and personal ones are rare, the soft brows and tender lips of girlhood are too often puckered and hardened by mean anxieties, even where these do not affect the girls personally, but only imitatively, and as the daily interests of their station in life. In such cases the discontented, careworn look is by no means a certain indication of corresponding suffering, but there are too many others in which tempers that should have been generous, and faces that should have been noble, and aims that should

have been high, are blurred and blunted by the real weight of real everyday care.

There are yet others; in which the spirit is too strong for mortal accidents to pull it down—minds that the narrowest career cannot vulgarize—faces to which care but adds a look of pathos—souls which keep their aims and faiths apart from the fluctuations of "the things that are seen." The personal influence of natures of this type is generally very large, and it was very large in the case of Cripple Charlie's father, and made him a sort of Prophet, Priest, and King over a rough and scattered population, with whom the shy, scholarly poor gentleman had not otherwise much in common.

It was his personal influence, I am sure, which made the congregation so devout! There is one rule which, I believe, applies to all congregations, of every denomination, and any kind of ritual, and that is, that the enthusiasm of the congregation is in direct proportion to the enthusiasm of the minister; not merely to his personal worth, nor even to his popularity, for people who rather dislike a clergyman, and disapprove of his service, will say a louder Amen at his giving of thanks if his own feelings have a touch of fire, than they would to that of a more perfunctory parson whom they liked better. As is the heartiness of the priest, so is the heartiness of the

people—with such strictness that one is disposed almost to credit some of it to actual magnetism. *Response* is no empty word in public worship.

It was no empty word on this occasion. From the ancient clerk (who kept a life-interest in what were now the duties of a choir) to some gaping farm-lads at my back, everybody said and sang to the utmost of his ability. I may add that Isaac and I involuntarily displayed a zeal which was in excess of our Sunday customs; and if my tongue moved glibly enough with the choir, the bee-master found many an elderly parishioner besides himself and the clerk who "took" both prayer and praise at such independent paces as suited their individual scholarship, spectacles, and notions of reverence.

It crowned my satisfaction when I found that there was to be a collection. The hymn to which the churchwardens moved about, gathering the pence, whose numbers and noisiness seemed in keeping with the rest of the service, was a well-known one to us all. It was the favourite evening hymn of the district. I knew every syllable of it, for Jem and I always sang hymns (and invariably this one) with my dear mother, on Sunday evening after supper. When we were good, we liked it, and, picking one favourite after another, we often sang nearly through the hymn-book. When we were naughty, we displayed a good deal of

skill in making derisive faces behind my mother's back, as she sat at the piano, without betraying ourselves, and in getting our tongues out and in again during the natural pauses and convolutions of the tune. But these occasional fits of boyish profanity did not hinder me from having an equally boyish fund of reverence and enthusiasm at the bottom of my heart, and it was with proud and pleasurable emotions that I heard the old clerk give forth the familiar first lines,

> "Soon shall the evening star with silver ray
> Shed its mild lustre o'er this sacred day,"

and got my threepenny-bit ready between my finger and thumb.

Away went the organ, which was played by the vicar's eldest daughter—away went the vicar's second daughter, who "led the singing" from the vicarage pew with a voice like a bird—away went the choir, which, in spite of surplices, could not be cured of waiting half a beat for her—and away went the congregation—young men and maidens, old men and children—in one broad tide of somewhat irregular harmony. Isaac did not know the words as well as I did, so I lent him my hymn-book; one result of which was, that the print being small, and the sense of a hymn being in his view a far more important

matter than the sound of it, he preached rather than sang—in an unequal cadence which was perturbing to my more musical ear—the familiar lines,

> "Still let each awful truth our thoughts engage,
> That shines revealed on inspiration's page;
> Nor those blest hours in vain amusement waste
> Which all who lavish shall lament at last."

During the next verse my devotions were a little distracted by the gradual approach of a churchwarden for my threepenny-bit, which was hot with three verses of expectant fingering. Then, to my relief, he took it, and the bee-master's contribution, and I felt calmer, and listened to the little prelude which it was always the custom for the organist to play before the final verse of a hymn. It was also the custom to sing the last verse as loudly as possible, though this is by no means invariably appropriate. It fitted the present occasion fairly enough. From where I stood I could see the bellows-blower (the magnetic current of enthusiasm flowed even to the back of the organ) nerve himself to prodigious pumping—Charlie's sister drew out all the stops—the vicar passed from the prayer-desk to the pulpit with the rapt look of a man who walks in a prophetic dream—we pulled ourselves together, Master Isaac brought the hymn-book close to his glasses, and when the tantalizing prelude was past we burst forth with a volume which merged all

discrepancies. As far as I am able to judge of my own performance, I fear I *bawled* (I'm sure the boy behind me did),

> "Father of Heaven, in Whom our hopes confide,
> Whose power defends us, and Whose precepts guide,
> In life our Guardian, and in death our Friend,
> Glory supreme be Thine till time shall end!"

The sermon was short, and when the service was over Master Isaac and I spent a delightful afternoon with his bees among the heather. The "evening star" had come out when we had some tea in the village inn, and we walked home by moonlight. There was neither wind nor sun, but the air was almost oppressively pure. The moonshine had taken the colour out of the sandy road and the heather, and had painted black shadows by every boulder, and most things looked asleep except the rill that went on running. Only we and the rabbits, and the night moths and the beetles, seemed to be stirring. An occasional bat appeared and vanished like a spectral illusion, and I saw one owl flap across the moor with level wings against the moon.

"Oh, I *have* enjoyed it!" was all I could say when I parted from the bee-master.

"And so have I, Master Jack," was his reply, and he hesitated as if he had something more to say, and then he said it. "I never enjoyed it as much, and

you can thank your mother, sir, with old Isaac's duty, for sending us to church. I'm sure I don't know why I never went before when I was up yonder, for I always took notice of the bells. I reckon I thought I hadn't time, but you can say, with my respects, sir, that please GOD I shan't miss again."

I believe he never did; and Cripple Charlie's father came to look on him as half a parishioner.

I was glad I had not shirked Evening Prayer myself, though (my sex and age considered) it was not to be expected that I should comfort my mother's heart by confessing as much. Let me confess it now, and confess also that if it was the first time, it was not the last that I have had cause to realize—oh women, for our sakes remember it!—into what light and gentle hands GOD lays the reins that guide men's better selves.

The most remarkable event of the day happened at the end of it. Whilst Isaac was feeling the weight of one of his hives, and just after I lost chase of a very peculiar-looking beetle, from his squeezing himself away from me under a boulder, I had caught sight of a bit of white heather, and then bethought me of gathering a nosegay (to include this rarity) of moor flowers and grasses for Mrs. Wood. So when we reached the lane on our way home, I bade Isaac

good-night, and said I would just run in by the back way into the farm (we never called it the Academy) and leave the flowers, that the school-mistress might put them in water. Mary Anne was in the kitchen.

"Where's Mrs. Wood?" said I, when she had got over that silly squeak women always give when you come suddenly on them.

"Dear, dear, Master Jack! what a turn you did give me! I thought it was the tramp."

"What tramp?" said I.

"Why, a great lanky man that came skulking here a bit since, and asked for the missus. She was down the garden, and I've half a notion he went after her. I wish you'd go and look for her, Master Jack, and fetch her in. It's as damp as dear knows what, and she takes no more care of herself than a baby. And I'd be glad to know that man was off the place. There's wall-fruit and lots of things about, a low fellow like that might pick up."

My ears felt a little hot at this allusion to low fellows and garden thieving, and I hurried off to do Mary Anne's bidding without further parley. There was a cloud over the moon as I ran down the back garden, but when I was nearly at the end the moon burst forth again, so that I could see. And this is what I saw:—

First, a white thing lying on the ground, and it

was the widow's cap, and then Mrs. Wood herself, with a gaunt lanky-looking man, such as Mary Anne had described. Her head came nearly to his shoulder, as I was well able to judge, for he was holding it in his hands and had laid his own upon it, as if it were a natural resting-place. And his hair coming against the darker part of hers, I could see that his was grey all over. Up to this point I had been too much stupefied to move, and I had just become conscious that I ought to go, when the white cap lying in the moonlight seemed to catch his eye as it had caught mine; and he set his heel on it with a vehemence that made me anxious to be off. I could not resist one look back as I left the garden, if only to make sure that I had not been dreaming. No, they were there still, and he was lifting the coil of her hair, which I suppose had come down when the cap was pulled off, and it took the full stretch of his arm to do so, before it fell heavily from his fingers.

When I presented myself to my mother with the bunch of flowers still in my hand, she said, "Did my Jack get these for Mother?"

I shook my head. "No, Mother. For Mrs. Wood."

"You might have called at the farm as you passed," said she.

"I did!" said I.

"Couldn't you see Mrs. Wood, love?"

"Yes, I saw her, but she'd got the tramp with her."

"What tramp?" asked my mother in a horror-struck voice, which seemed quite natural to me, for I had been brought up to rank tramps in the same "dangerous class" with mad dogs, stray bulls, drunken men, and other things which it is undesirable to meet.

"The great lanky one," I explained, quoting from Mary Anne.

"What was he doing with Mrs. Wood?" asked my mother anxiously.

I had not yet recovered from my own bewilderment, and was reckless of the shock inflicted by my reply.

"*Pooring* her head, and kissing it."

CHAPTER V.

"To each his sufferings; all are men
Condemned alike to groan.
The tender for another's pain——"

GRAY.

NOT even the miser's funeral had produced in the neighbourhood anything like the excitement which followed that Sunday evening. At first my mother—her mind filled by the simplest form of the problem, namely, that Mrs. Wood was in the hands of a tramp—wished my father to take the blunderbuss in his hand and step down to the farm. He had "pish"ed and "pshaw"ed about the blunderbuss, and was beginning to say more, when I was dismissed to bed, where I wandered back over the moors in uneasy dreams, and woke with the horror of a tramp's hand upon my shoulder. After suffering the terrors of night for some time, and finding myself no braver with my head under the bedclothes than above them, I began conscientiously to try my mother's family recipe for "bad dreams and being afraid in the

dark." This was to "say over" the Benedicite correctly, which (if by a rare chance one were still awake at the end) was to be followed by a succession of the hymns one knew by heart. It required an effort to *begin*, and to *really try*, but the children of such mothers as ours are taught to make efforts, and once fairly started, and holding on as a duty, it certainly did tend to divert the mind from burglars and ghosts, to get the beasts, creeping things, and fowls of the air into their right places in the chorus of benedictions. That Jem never could discriminate between the "Dews and Frosts" and "Frost and Cold" verses needs no telling. I have often finished and still been frightened and had to fall back upon the hymns, but this night I began to dream pleasanter dreams of Charlie's father and the bee-master before I got to the holy and humble men of heart.

I slept long then, and Mother would not let me be awakened. When I did open my eyes Jem was sitting at the end of the bed, dying to tell me the news.

"Jack! you have waked, haven't you? I see your eyes. Don't shut 'em again. What *do* you think? *Mrs. Wood's husband has come home!*"

I never knew the ins and outs of the story very exactly. At the time that what did become generally known was fresh in people's minds Jem and I were not by way of being admitted to "grown-up" con-

versations; and though Mrs. Wood's husband and I became intimate friends, I neither wished nor dared to ask him more about his past than he chose to tell, for I knew enough to know that it must be a most intolerable pain to recall it.

What we had all heard of the story was this. Mr. Wood had been a head clerk in a house of business. A great forgery was committed against his employers, and he was accused. He was tried, condemned, and sentenced to fourteen years' penal servitude, which, in those days, meant transportation abroad. For some little time the jury had not been unanimous. One man doubted the prisoner's guilt—the man we afterwards knew as the old miser of Walnut-tree Farm. But he was over-persuaded at last, and Mr. Wood was convicted and sentenced. He had spent ten years of his penal servitude in Bermuda when a man lying in Maidstone Jail under sentence of death for murder, confessed (amongst other crimes of which he disburdened his conscience) that it was he, and not the man who had been condemned, who had committed the forgery. Investigation confirmed the truth of this statement, and Mr. Wood was "pardoned" and brought home.

He had just come. He was the tramp.

In this life the old miser never knew that his first judgment had been the just one, but the doubt

which seems always to have haunted him—whether he had not helped to condemn the innocent—was the reason of his bequest to the convict's wife, and explained much of the mysterious wording of the will.

It was a tragic tale, and gave a terrible interest to the gaunt, white-haired, shattered-looking man who was the hero of it. It had one point of special awe for me, and I used to watch him in church and think of it, till I am ashamed to say that I forgot even when to stand up and sit down. He had served ten years of his sentence. Ten years! Ten times three hundred and sixty-five days! All the days of the years of my life. The weight of that undeserved punishment had fallen on him the year that I was born, and all that long, long time of home with Mother and Father and Jem—all the haymaking summers and snowballing winters—whilst Jem and I had never been away from home, and had had so much fun, and nothing very horrid that I could call to mind except the mumps—he had been an exile working in chains. I remember rousing up with a start from the realization of this one Sunday to find myself still standing in the middle of the Litany. My mother was behaving too well herself to find me out, and though Jem was giggling he dared not move, because he was

kneeling next my father, whose back was turned to me. I knelt down, and started to hear the parson say—"show Thy pity upon all prisoners and captives!" And then I knew what it is to wish when it is too late. For I did so wish I had really prayed for prisoners and captives every Sunday, because then I should have prayed for that poor man nearly all the long time he had been so miserable; for we began to go to church very early, and one learns to pray easier and sooner than one learns anything else.

All this had happened in the holidays, but when they were over school opened as before, and with additional scholars; for sympathy was wide and warm with the school-mistress. Strangely enough, both partners in the firm which had prosecuted Mr. Wood were dead. Their successors offered him employment, but he could not face the old associations. I believe he found it so hard to face any one, that this was the reason of his staying at home for a time and helping in the school. I don't think we boys made him uncomfortable as grown-up strangers seemed to do, and he was particularly fond of Cripple Charlie.

This brought me into contact with him, for Charlie and I were great friends. He was as well pleased to be read to out of the Penny Numbers as

the bee-master, and he was interested in things of which Isaac Irvine was completely ignorant.

Our school was a day-school, but Charlie had been received by Mrs. Wood as a boarder. His poor back could not have borne to be jolted to and from the moors every day. So he lived at Walnut-tree Farm, and now and then his father would come down in a light cart, lent by one of the parishioners, and take Charlie home from Saturday to Monday, and then bring him back again.

The sisters came to see him too, by turns, sometimes walking and sometimes riding a rough-coated pony, who was well content to be tied to a gate, and eat some of the grass that overgrew the lane. And often Charlie came to *us*, especially in haytime, for haycocks seem very comfortable (for people whose backs hurt) to lean against; and we could cover his legs with hay too, as he liked them to be hidden. There is no need to say how tender my mother was to him, and my father used to look at him half puzzledly and half pitifully, and always spoke to him in quite a different tone of voice to the one he used with other boys.

Jem gave Charlie the best puppy out of the curly brown spaniel lot; but he didn't really like being with him, though he was sorry for him, and he could not bear seeing his poor legs.

"They make me feel horrid," Jem said. "And even when they're covered up, I know they're there."

"You're a chip of the old block, Jem," said my father. "I'd give a guinea to a hospital any day sooner than see a patient. I'm as sorry as can be for the poor lad, but he turns me queer, though I feel ashamed of it. I like things *sound*. Your mother's different; she likes 'em better for being sick and sorry, and I suppose Jack takes after her."

My father was wrong about me. Pity for Charlie was not half of the tie between us. When he was talking, or listening to the penny numbers, I never thought about his legs or his back, and I don't now understand how anybody could.

He read and remembered far more than I did, and he was even wilder about strange countries. He had as adventurous a spirit as any lad in the school, cramped up as it was in that misshapen body. I knew he'd have liked to go round the world as well as I, and he often laughed and said—"What's more, Jack, if I'd the money I would. People are very kind to poor wretches like me all over the world. I should never want a helping hand, and the only difference between us would be, that I should be carried on board ship by some kind-hearted blue-jacket, and you'd have to scramble for yourself."

He was very anxious to know Isaac Irvine, and when I brought the bee-master to see him, they seemed to hold friendly converse with their looks even before either of them spoke. It was a bad day with Charlie, but he set his lips against the pain, and raised himself on one arm to stare out of his big brown eyes at the old man, who met them with as steady a gaze out of his. Then Charlie lowered himself again, and said in a tone of voice by which I knew he was pleased, "I'm so glad you've come to see me, old Isaac. It's very kind of you. Jack says you know a lot about live things, and that you like the numbers we like in the *Penny Cyclopædia*. I wanted to see you, for I think you and I are much in the same boat; you're old, and I'm crippled, and we're both too poor to travel. But Jack's to go, and when he's gone, you and I'll follow him on the map."

"GOD willing, sir," said the bee-master; and when he said that, I knew how sorry he felt for poor Charlie, for when he was moved he always said very short things, and generally something religious.

And for all Charlie's whims and fancies, and in all his pain and fretfulness, and through fits of silence and sensitiveness, he had never a better friend than Isaac Irvine. Indeed the bee-master

was one of those men (to be found in all ranks) whose delicate tenderness might not be guessed from the size and roughness of the outer man.

Our neighbours were all very kind to Mr. Wood, in their own way, but they were a little impatient of his slowness to be sociable, and had, I think, a sort of feeling that the ex-convict ought not only to enjoy evening parties more than other people, but to be just a little more grateful for being invited.

However, one must have a strong and sensitive imagination to cultivate wide sympathies when one lives a quiet, methodical life in the place where one's father and grandfather lived out quiet methodical lives before one; and I do not think we were an imaginative race.

The school-master (as we used to call him) had seen and suffered so much more of life than we, that I do not think he resented the clumsiness of our sympathy; but now I look back I fancy that he must have felt as if he wanted years of peace and quiet in which to try and forget the years of suffering. Old Isaac said one day, "I reckon the master feels as if he wanted to sit down and say to hisself over and over again, 'I'm a free man, I'm a free man, I'm a free man,' till he can fair trust himself to believe it."

Isaac was probably right, and perhaps evening parties, though they are meant for treats, are not the

best places to sit down and feel free in, particularly when there are a lot of strange people who have heard a dreadful story about you, and want to see what you look like after it.

During the summer holidays Jem and I were out the whole day long. When we came in I was ready for the Penny Numbers, but Jem always fell asleep, even if he did not go to bed at once. My father did just the same. I think their feeling about houses was of a perfectly primitive kind. They looked upon them as comfortable shelter for sleeping and eating, but not at all as places in which to pursue any occupation. Life, for them, was lived out-of-doors.

I know now how dull this must have made the evenings for my mother, and that it was very selfish of me to wait till my father was asleep (for fear he should say "no"), and then to ask her leave to take the Penny Numbers down to the farm and sit with Cripple Charlie.

Now and then she would go too, and chat with Mrs. Wood, whilst the school-master and I were turning the terrestrial globe by Charlie's sofa; but as a rule Charlie and I were alone, and the Woods went round the homestead together, and came home hand in hand, through the garden, and we laughed to think how we had taken him for a tramp.

And sometimes on a summer's evening, when we

talked and read aloud to each other across a quaint oak table that had been the miser's, of far-away lands and strange birds of gorgeous plumage, the schoolmaster sat silent in the arm-chair by the open lattice, resting his white head against the mullion that the ivy was creeping up, and listened to the blackbirds and thrushes as their songs dropped by odd notes into silence, and gazed at the near fields and trees, and the little homestead with its hayricks on the hill, when the grass was apple-green in the gold mist of sunset: and went on gazing when that had faded into fog, and the hedgerow elms were black against the sky, as if the eye could not be filled with seeing, nor the ear with hearing!

CHAPTER VI.

"Who, doomed to go in company with Pain,
Turns his necessity to glorious gain."

WORDSWORTH.

"JACK," said Charlie, "listen!"

He was reading bits out of the numbers to me, whilst I was rigging a miniature yacht to sail on the dam; and Mrs. Wood's husband was making a plan of something at another table, and occasionally giving me advice about my masts and sails. "It's about the South American forests," said Charlie. "'There every tree has a character of its own; each has its peculiar foliage, and probably also a tint unlike that of the trees which surround it. Gigantic vegetables of the most different families intermix their branches; five-leaved bignonias grow by the side of bonduc-trees; cassias shed their yellow blossoms upon the rich fronds of arborescent ferns; myrtles and eugenias, with their thousand arms, contrast with the elegant simplicity of palms; and among the airy foliage of the

mimosa the ceropia elevates its giant leaves and heavy candelabra-shaped branches. Of some trees the trunk is perfectly smooth, of others it is defended by enormous spines, and the whole are often apparently sustained by the slanting stems of a huge wild fig-tree. With us, the oak, the chestnut, and the beech seem as if they bore no flowers, so small are they and so little distinguishable except by naturalists; but in the forests of South America it is often the most gigantic trees that produce the most brilliant flowers; cassias hang down their pendants of golden blossoms, vochisias unfold their singular bunches; corollas, longer than those of our foxglove, sometimes yellow or sometimes purple, load the arborescent bignonias; while the chorisias are covered, as it were, with lilies, only their colours are richer and more varied; grasses also appear in form of bamboos, as the most graceful of trees; bauhinias, bignonias, and aroideous plants cling round the trees like enormous cables; orchideous plants and bromelias overrun their limbs, or fasten themselves to them when prostrated by the storm, and make even their dead remains become verdant with leaves and flowers not their own.'"

Though he could read very well, Charlie had, so far, rather stumbled through the long names in this description, but he finished off with fluency, not to say enthusiasm. "'Such are the ancient forests,

flourishing in a damp and fertile soil, and clothed with perpetual green.'"

I was half-way through a profound sigh when I caught the school-master's eye, who had paused in his plan-making and was listening with his head upon his hand.

"What a groan!" he exclaimed. "What's the matter?"

"It sounds so splendid!" I answered, "and I'm so afraid I shall never see it. I told Father last night I should like to be a sailor, but he only said 'Stuff and nonsense,' and that there was a better berth waiting for me in Uncle Henry's office than any of the Queen's ships would provide for me; and Mother begged me never to talk of it any more, if I didn't want to break her heart"—and I sighed again.

The school-master had a long smooth face, which looked longer from melancholy, and he turned it and his arms over the back of the chair, and looked at me with the watchful listening look his eyes always had; but I am not sure if he was really paying much attention to me, for he talked (as he often did) as if he were talking to himself.

"I wanted to be a soldier," he said, "and my father wouldn't let me. I often used to wish I had run away and enlisted, when I was with Quarter-master McCulloch, of the Engineers (he'd risen

from the ranks and was younger than me), in Bermuda."

"Bermuda! That's not very far from South America, is it?" said I, looking across to the big map of the world. "Is it very beautiful, too?"

The school-master's eyes contracted as if he were short-sighted, or looking at something inside his own head. But he smiled as he answered—

"The poet says,

> 'A pleasing land of drowsy-head it is,
> Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;
> And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
> For ever flushing round a summer sky.'"

"But are there any curious beasts and plants and that sort of thing?" I asked.

"I believe there were no native animals originally," said the school-master. "I mean inland ones. But the fowls of the air and the fishes of the sea are of all lovely forms and colours. And such corals and sponges, and sea-anemones, blooming like flowers in the transparent pools of the warm blue water that washes the coral reefs and fills the little creeks and bays!"

I gasped—and he went on. "The commonest trees, I think, are palms and cedars. Lots of the old houses were built of cedar, and I've heard of old cedar furniture to be picked up here and there, as

some people buy old oak out of English farm-houses. It is very durable and deliciously scented. People used to make cedar bonfires when the small-pox was about, to keep away infection. The gardens will grow anything, and plots of land are divided by oleander hedges of many colours."

"Oh—h!" ejaculated I, in long-drawn notes of admiration. The school-master's eyes twinkled.

"Not only," continued he, "do very gaudy lobsters and quaint cray-fish and crabs with lanky legs dispute your attention on the shore with the shell-fish of the loveliest hues; there is no lack of remarkable creatures indoors. Monstrous spiders, whose bite is very unpleasant, drop from the roof; tarantulas and scorpions get into your boots, and cockroaches, hideous to behold and disgusting to smell, invade every place from your bed to your store-cupboard. If you possess anything, from food and clothing to books and boxes, the ants will find it and devour it, and if you possess a garden the mosquitoes will find you and devour you."

"Oh—h!" I exclaimed once more, but this time in a different tone.

Mr. Wood laughed heartily. "Tropical loveliness has its drawbacks, Jack. Perhaps some day when your clothes are moulded, and your brain feels mouldy too with damp heat, and you can neither work in the

sun nor be at peace in the shade, you may wish you were sitting on a stool in your uncle's office, undisturbed by venomous insects, and cool in a November fog."

I laughed too, but I shook my head.

"No. I shan't mind the insects if I can get there. Charlie, were those wonderful ants old Isaac said you'd been reading about, Bermuda ants?"

I did not catch Charlie's muttered reply, and when I looked round I saw that his face was buried in the red cushions, and that he was (what Jem used to call) "in one of his tempers."

I don't exactly know how it was. I don't think Charlie was jealous or really cross, but he used to take fits of fancying he was in the way, and out of it all (from being a cripple), if we seemed to be very busy without him, especially about such things as planning adventures. I knew what was the matter directly, but I'm afraid my consolation was rather clumsy.

"Don't be cross, Charlie," I said; "I thought you were listening too, and if it's because you think you won't be able to go, I don't believe there's really a bit more chance of my going, though my legs *are* all right."

"Don't bother about me," said Charlie; "but I wish you'd put these numbers down, they're in my way." And he turned pettishly over.

Before I could move, the school-master had taken the papers, and was standing over Charlie's couch, with his right hand against the wall, at the level of his head, and his left arm hanging by his side; and I suppose it was his attitude which made me notice, before he began to speak, what a splendid figure he had, and how strong he looked. He spoke in an odd, abrupt sort of voice, very different from the way he had been talking to me, but he looked down at Charlie so intensely, that I think he felt it through the cushions, and lifted his head.

"When your father has been bringing you down here, or at any time when you have been out amongst other people, have you ever overheard them saying, 'Poor chap! it's a sad thing,' and things of that kind, as if they were sorry for you?"

Cripple Charlie's face flushed scarlet, and my own cheeks burned, as I looked daggers at the school-master, for what seemed a brutal insensibility to the lame boy's feelings. He did not condescend, however, to meet my eyes. His own were still fixed steadily on Charlie's, and he went on.

"*I've heard it.* My ears are quick, and for many a Sunday after I came I caught the whispers behind me as I went up the aisle, 'Poor man!' 'Poor gentleman!' 'He looks bad, too!' One morning an old woman, in a big black bonnet, said, 'Poor

soul!' so close to me, that I looked down, and met her withered eyes, full of tears—for me!—and I said, 'Thank you, mother,' and she fingered the sleeve of my coat with her trembling hand (the veins were standing out on it like ropes), and said, 'I've knowed trouble myself, my dear. The Lord bless yours to you!'"

"It must have been Betty Johnson," I interpolated; but the school-master did not even look at me.

"You and I," he said, bending nearer to Cripple Charlie, "have had our share of this life's pain so dealt out to us that any one can see and pity us. My boy, take a fellow-sufferer's word for it, it is wise and good not to shrink from the seeing and pitying. The weight of the cross spreads itself and becomes lighter if one learns to suffer with others as well as with oneself, to take pity and to give it. And as one learns to be pained with the pains of others, one learns to be happy in their happiness and comforted by their sympathy, and then no man's life can be quite empty of pleasure. I don't know if my troubles have been lighter or heavier ones than yours——"

The school-master stopped short, and turned his head so that his face was almost hidden against his hand upon the wall. Charlie's big eyes were full of tears, and I am sure I distinctly felt my ears poke

forwards on my head with anxious curiosity to catch what Mr. Wood would tell us about that dreadful time of which he had never spoken.

"When I was your age," he said bluntly, "I was unusually lithe and active and strong for mine. When I was half as old again, I was stronger than any man I knew, and had many a boyish triumph out of my strength, because I was slender and graceful, and this concealed my powers. I had all the energies and ambitions natural to unusual vigour and manly skill. I wanted to be a soldier, but it was not to be, and I spent my youth at a desk in a house of business. I adapted myself, but none the less I chafed whenever I heard of manly exploits, and of the delights and dangers that came of seeing the world. I used to think I could bear anything to cross the seas and see foreign climes. I did cross the Atlantic at last—a convict in a convict ship (God help any man who knows what that is!), and I spent the ten best years of my manhood at the hulks working in chains. You've never lost freedom, my lad, so you have never felt what it is not to be able to believe you've got it back. You don't know what it is to turn nervous at the responsibility of being your own master for a whole day, or to wake in a dainty room, with the birds singing at the open window, and to shut your eyes quickly and pray to

go on dreaming a bit, because you feel sure you're really in your hammock in the hulks."

The school-master lifted his other hand above his head, and pressed both on it, as if he were in pain. What Charlie was doing I don't know, but I felt so miserable I could not help crying, and had to hunt for my pocket-handkerchief under the table. It was full of acorns, and by the time I had emptied it and dried my eyes, Mr. Wood was lifting Charlie in his arms, and arranging his cushions.

"Oh, thank you!" Charlie said, as he leant back; "how comfortable you have made me!"

"I have been sick-nurse, amongst other trades. For some months I was a hospital warder."

"Was that when——" Charlie began, and then he stopped short, and said, "Oh, I beg your pardon!"

"Yes; it was when I was a convict," said the school-master. "No offence, my boy. If I preach I must try to practise. Jack's eyes are dropping out of his head to hear more of Bermuda, and you and I will put our whims and moods on one side, and we'll all tell travellers' tales together."

Cripple Charlie kept on saying "Thank you," and I know he was very sorry not to be able to think of anything more to say, for he told me so. He wanted to have thanked him better, because he knew that Mr. Wood had talked about his having been a

convict, when he did not like to talk about it, just to show Charlie that he knew what pain, and not being able to do what you want, feel like, and that Charlie ought not to fancy he was neglected.

And that was the beginning of all the stories the school-master used to tell us, and of the natural history lessons he gave us, and of his teaching me to stuff birds, and do all kinds of things.

We used to say to him, "You're better than the Penny Numbers, for you're quite as interesting, and we're sure you're true." And the odd thing was that he made Charlie much more contented, because he started him with so many collections, whilst he made me only more and more anxious to see the world.

CHAPTER VII.

"Much would have more, and lost all."—*English Proverb.*

"Learn you to an ill habit, and ye'll ca't custom."
Scotch Proverb.

THE lane was full of colour that autumn, the first autumn of the convict's return. The leaves turned early, and fell late, and made the hedges gayer than when the dog-roses were out; for not only were the leaves of all kinds brighter than many flowers, but the berries (from the holly and mountain-ash to the hips and haws) were so thick-set, and so red and shining, that, as my dear mother said, "they looked almost artificial."

I remember it well, because of two things. First, that Jem got five of the largest hips we had ever seen off a leafless dog-rose branch which stuck far out of the hedge, and picked the little green coronets off, so that they were smooth and glossy, and egg-shaped, and crimson on one side and yellow on the other; and then he got an empty chaffinch's nest close by and put the five hips into it, and took it

home, and persuaded Alice our new parlourmaid that it was a robin redbreast's nest with eggs in it. And she believed it, for she came from London and knew no better.

The second thing I remember that autumn by, is that everybody expected a hard winter because of the berries being so fine, and the hard winter never came, and the birds ate worms and grubs and left most of the hedge fruits where they were.

November was bright and mild, and the morning frosts only made the berries all the glossier when the sun came out. We had one or two snow-storms in December, and then we all said, "Now it's coming!" but the snow melted away and left no bones behind. In January the snow lay longer, and left big bones on the moors, and Jem and I made a slide to school on the pack track, and towards the end of the month the mill-dam froze hard, and we had slides fifteen yards long, and skating; and Winter seemed to have come back in good earnest to fetch his bones away.

Jem was great fun in frosty weather; Charlie and I used to die of laughing at him. I think cold made him pugnacious; he seemed always ready for a row, and was constantly in one. The January frost came in our Christmas holidays, so Jem had lots of time on his hands; he spent almost all of it out of doors, and he devoted a good deal of it to fighting with the

rough lads of the village. There was a standing subject of quarrel, which is a great thing for either tribes or individuals who have a turn that way. A pond at the corner of the lower paddock was fed by a stream which also fed the mill-dam; and the mill-dam was close by, though, as it happened, not on my father's property. Old custom made the mill-dam the winter resort of all the village sliders and skaters, and my father displayed a good deal of toleration when those who could not find room for a new slide, or wished to practise their "outer edge" in a quiet spot, came climbing over the wall (there was no real thoroughfare) and invaded our pond.

Perhaps it is because gratitude is a fatiguing virtue, or perhaps it is because self-esteem has no practical limits, that favours are seldom regarded as such for long. They are either depreciated, or claimed as rights; very often both. And what is common in all classes is almost universal amongst the uneducated. You have only to make a system of giving your cast-off clothes to some shivering family, and you will not have to wait long for an eloquent essay on their shabbiness, or for an outburst of sincere indignation if you venture to reserve a warm jacket for a needy relative. Prescriptive rights, in short, grow faster than pumpkins, which is amongst the many warnings life affords us to be just as well as

generous. Thence it had come about that the young roughs of the village regarded our pond to all winter intents and purposes as theirs, and my father as only so far and so objectionably concerned in the matter that he gave John Binder a yearly job in patching up the wall which it took them three months' trouble to kick a breach in.

Our neighbours were what is called "very independent" folk. In the grown-up people this was modified by the fact that no one who has to earn his own livelihood can be quite independent of other people; if he would live he must let live, and throw a little civility into the bargain. But boys of an age when their parents found meals and hobnailed boots for them whether they behaved well or ill, were able to display independence in its roughest form. And when the boys of our neighbourhood were rough, they were very rough indeed.

The village boys had their Christmas holidays about the same time that we had ours, which left them as much spare time for sliding and skating as we had, but they had their dinner at twelve o'clock, whilst we had ours at one, so that any young roughs who wished to damage our pond were just comfortably beginning their mischief as Jem and I were saying grace before meat, and the thought of it took away our appetites again and again.

That winter they were particularly aggravating. The December frost was a very imperfect one, and the mill-dam never bore properly, so the boys swarmed over our pond, which was shallow and safe. Very few of them could even hobble on skates, and those few carried the art no farther than by cutting up the slides. But thaw came on, so that there was no sliding, and then the young roughs amused themselves with stamping holes in the soft ice with their hob-nailed heels. When word came to us that they were taking the stones off our wall and pitching them down on to the soft ice below, to act as skaters' stumbling-blocks for the rest of that hard winter which we expected, Jem's indignation was not greater than mine. My father was not at home, and indeed, when we had complained before, he rather snubbed us, and said that we could not want the whole of the pond to ourselves, and that he had always lived quietly with his neighbours and we must learn to do the same, and so forth. No action at all calculated to assuage our thirst for revenge was likely to be taken by him, so Jem and I held a council by Charlie's sofa, and it was a council of war. At the end we all three solemnly shook hands, and Charlie was left to write and despatch brief notes of summons to our more distant school-mates, whilst Jem and I tucked up our trousers, wound our comforters sternly round

our throats, and went forth in different directions to gather the rest.

(Having lately been reading about the Highlanders, who used to send round a fiery cross when the clans were called to battle, I should have liked to do so in this instance; but as some of the Academy boys were no greater readers than Jem, they might not have known what it meant, so we abandoned the notion.)

There was not an Academy boy worth speaking of who was in time for dinner the following day; and several of them brought brothers or cousins to the fray. By half-past twelve we had crept down the field that was on the other side of our wall, and had hidden ourselves in various corners of a cattle-shed, where a big cart and some sail-cloth and a turnip heap provided us with ambush. By and by certain familiar whoops and hullohs announced that the enemy was coming. One or two bigger boys made for the dam (which I confess was a relief to us), but our own particular foes advanced with a rush upon the wall.

"They hevn't coomed yet, hev they?" we heard the sexton's son say, as he peeped over at our pond.

"Noa," was the reply. "It's not gone one yet."

"It's gone one by t' church. I yeard it as we was coming up t' lane."

"T' church clock's always hafe-an-hour fasst, thee knows."

"It isn't!"

"It is."

"T' church clock's t' one to go by, anyhow," the sexton's son maintained.

His friend guffawed aloud.

"And it's a reight 'un to go by too, my sakes! when thee feyther shifts t' time back'ards and for'ards every Sunday morning to suit hissen."

"To suit hissen! To suit t' ringers, ye mean!" said the sexton's son.

"What's thou to do wi' t' ringers?" was the reply, enforced apparently by a punch in the back, and the two lads came cuffing and struggling up the field, much to my alarm, but fortunately they were too busy to notice us.

Meanwhile, the rest had not been idle at the wall. Jem had climbed on the cart, and peeping through a brick hole he could see that they had with some difficulty disengaged a very heavy stone. As we were turning our heads to watch the two lads fighting near our hiding-place, we heard the stone strike with a heavy thud upon the rotten ice below, and it was echoed by a groan of satisfaction from above.

("Ready!" I whispered.)

"You'll break somebody's nose when it's frosted

in," cried Bob Furniss, in a tone of sincere gratification.

"Eh, Tim Binder! there'll be a rare job for thee feyther next spring, fettling up this wall, by t' time we've done wi' it."

"Let me come," we heard Tim say. "Thou can't handle a stone. Let me come. Th' ice is as soft as loppered milk, and i' ten minutes I'll fill yon bit they're so chuff of skating on, as thick wi' stones as a quarry."

("Now!" I said.)

Our foes considerably outnumbered us, but I think they were at a disadvantage. They had worked off a good deal of their steam, and ours was at explosion point. We took them by surprise and in the rear. They had had some hard exercise, and we were panting to begin. As a matter of fact those who could get away ran away. We caught all we could, and punched and pummelled and rolled them in the snow to our hearts' content.

Jem never was much of a talker, and I never knew him speak when he was fighting; but three several times on this occasion, I heard him say very stiffly and distinctly (he was on the top of Tim Binder), "I'll fettle thee! I'll fettle thee! I'll fettle thee!"

The battle was over, the victory was ours, but the campaign was not ended, and thenceforward the dis-

advantages would be for us. Even real warfare is complicated when men fight with men less civilized than themselves; and we had learnt before now that when we snowballed each other or snowballed the rougher "lot" of village boys, we did so under different conditions. *We* had our own code of honour and fairness, but Bob Furniss was not above putting a stone into a snowball if he owed a grudge.

So when we heard a rumour that the bigger "roughs" were going to join the younger ones, and lie in wait to "pay us off" the first day we came down to the ice, I cannot say we felt comfortable, though we resolved to be courageous. Meanwhile, the thaw continued, which suspended operations, and gave time, which is good for healing; and Christmas came, and we and our foes met and mingled in the mummeries of the season, and wished each other Happy New Years, and said nothing about the pond.

How my father came to hear of the matter we did not know at the time, but one morning he summoned Jem and me, and bade us tell him all about it. I was always rather afraid of my father, and I should have made out a very stammering story, but Jem flushed up like a turkey-cock, and gave our version of the business very straightforwardly. The other side of the tale my father had evidently heard, and we fancied he must have heard also of the intended

attack on us, for it never took place, and we knew of interviews which he had with John Binder and others of our neighbours; and when the frost came in January, we found that the stones had been taken out of the pond, and my father gave us a sharp lecture against being quarrelsome and giving ourselves airs, and it ended with—"The pond is mine. I wish you to remember it, because it makes it your duty to be hospitable and civil to the boys I allow to go on it. And I have very decidedly warned them and their parents to remember it, because if my permission for fair amusement is abused to damage and trespass, I shall withdraw the favour and prosecute intruders. But the day I shut up my pond from my neighbours, I shall forbid you and Jack to go on it again unless the fault is more entirely on one side than it's likely to be when boys squabble."

My father waved our dismissal, but I hesitated.

"The boys won't think we told tales to you to get out of another fight?" I gasped.

"Everybody knows perfectly well how I heard. It came to the sexton's ears, and he very properly informed me."

I felt relieved, and the first day we had on the ice went off very fairly. The boys were sheepish at first and slow to come on, and when they had assembled in force they were inclined to be bullying. But Jem

and I kept our tempers, and by and by my father came down to see us, and headed a long slide in which we and our foes were combined. As he left he pinched Jem's frosty ear, and said, "Let me hear if there's any real malice, but don't double your fists at every trifle. Slide and let slide! slide and let slide!" And he took a pinch of snuff and departed.

And Jem was wonderfully peaceable for the rest of the day. A word from my father went a long way with him. They were very fond of each other.

I had no love of fighting for fighting's sake, and I had other interests besides sliding and skating; so I was well satisfied that we got through the January frost without further breaches of the peace. Towards the end of the month we all went a good deal upon the mill-dam, and Mr. Wood (assisted by me as far as watching, handing tools and asking questions went) made a rough sledge, in which he pushed Charlie before him as he skated; and I believe the village boys, as well as his own school-fellows, were glad that Cripple Charlie had a share in the winter fun, for wherever Mr. Wood drove him, both sliders and skaters made way.

And even on the pond there were no more real battles that winter. Only now and then some mischievous urchin tripped up our brand-new skates, and begged our pardon as he left us on our backs. And

more than once, when "the island" in the middle of the pond was a very fairyland of hoar-frosted twigs and snow-plumed larches, I have seen its white loveliness rudely shaken, and skating round to discover the cause, have beheld Jem, with cheeks redder than his scarlet comforter, return an "accidental" shove with interest; or posed like a ruffled robin redbreast, to defend a newly-made slide against intruders.

CHAPTER VIII.

"He it was who sent the snowflakes
Sifting, hissing through the forest;
Froze the ponds, the lakes, the rivers,
* * * * *
Shinbegis, the diver, feared not."

The Song of Hiawatha.

THE first day of February was mild, and foggy, and cloudy, and in the night I woke feeling very hot, and threw off my quilt, and heard the dripping of soft rain in the dark outside, and thought, "There goes our skating." Towards morning, however, I woke again, and had to pull the quilt back into its place, and when I started after breakfast to see what the dam looked like, there was a sharpish frost, which, coming after a day of thaw, had given the ice such a fine smooth surface as we had not had for long.

I felt quite sorry for Jem, because he was going in the dog-cart with my father to see a horse, and as I hadn't got him to skate with, I went down to the farm after breakfast, to see what Charlie and the Woods were going to do. Charlie was not well, but Mr.

Wood said he would come to the dam with me after dinner, as he had to go to the next village on business, and the dam lay in his way.

"Keep to the pond this morning, Jack," he added, to my astonishment. "Remember it thawed all yesterday; and if the wheel was freed and has been turning, it has run water off from under the ice, and all may not be sound that's smooth."

The pond was softer than it looked, but the mill-dam was most tempting. A sheet of "glare ice," as Americans say, smooth and clear as a newly-washed window-pane. I did not go on it, but I brought Mr. Wood to it early in the afternoon, in the full hope that he would give me leave.

We found several young men on the bank, some fastening their skates and some trying the ice with their heels, and as we stood there the numbers increased, and most of them went on without hesitation; and when they rushed in groups together, I noticed that the ice slightly swayed.

"The ice bends a good deal," said Mr. Wood to a man standing next to us.

"They say it's not so like to break when it bends," was the reply; and the man moved on.

A good many of the elder men from the village had come up, and a group, including John Binder, now stood alongside of us.

"There's a good sup of water atop of it," said the mason; and I noticed then that the ice seemed to look wetter, like newly-washed glass still, but like glass that wants wiping dry.

"I'm afraid the ice is not safe," said the school-master.

"It's a tidy thickness, sir," said John Binder, and a heavy man, with his hands in his pockets and his back turned to us, stepped down and gave two or three jumps, and then got up again, and, with his back still turned towards us, said,

"It's reight enough."

"It's right enough for one man, but not for a crowd, I'm afraid. Was the water-wheel freed last night, do you know?"

"It was loosed last night, but it's froz again," said a bystander.

"It's not freezing now," said the school-master, "and you may see how much larger that weak place where the stream is has got since yesterday. However," he added, good-humouredly, "I suppose you think you know your own mill-dam and its ways better than I can?"

"Well," said the heavy man, still with his back to us, "I reckon we've slid on this dam a many winters afore *you* come. No offence, I hope?"

"By no means," said the school-master; "but if

you old hands do begin to feel doubtful as the afternoon goes on, call off those lads at the other end in good time. And if you could warn them not to go in rushes together—but perhaps they would not listen to you," he added with a spice of malice.

"I don't suppose they would, sir," said John Binder, candidly. "They're very venturesome, is lads."

"I reckon they'll suit themselves," said the heavy man, and he jumped on to the ice, and went off, still with his back to us.

"If I hadn't lived so many years out of England and out of the world," said the school-master, turning to me with a half-vexed laugh, "I don't suppose I should discredit myself to no purpose by telling fools they are in danger. Jack! will you promise me not to go on the dam this afternoon?"

"It is dangerous, is it?" I asked reluctantly; for I wanted sorely to join the rest.

"That's a matter of opinion, it seems. But I have a wish that you should not go on till I come back. I'll be as quick as I can. Promise me."

"I promise," said I.

"Will you walk with me?" he asked. But I refused. I thought I would rather watch the others; and accordingly, after I had followed the school-master with my eyes as he strode off at a pace that promised

soon to bring him back, I put my hands into my pockets and joined the groups of watchers on the bank. I suppose if I had thought about it, I might have observed that though I was dawdling about, my nose and ears and fingers were not nipped. Mr. Wood was right,—it had not been freezing for hours past.

The first thing I looked for was the heavy man. He was so clumsy-looking that I quite expected him to fall when he walked off on to ice only fit for skaters. But as I looked closer I saw that the wet on the top was beginning to have a curdled look, and that the glassiness of the mill-dam was much diminished. The heavy man's heavy boots got good foothold, and several of his friends, seeing this, went after him. And my promise weighed sorely on me.

The next thing that drew my attention was a lad of about seventeen, who was skating really well. Indeed, everybody was looking at him, for he was the only one of the villagers who could perform in any but the clumsiest fashion, and, with an active interest that hovered between jeering and applause, his neighbours followed him up and down the dam. As I might not go on, I wandered up and down the bank too, and occasionally joined in a murmured cheer when he deftly evaded some intentional blunderer, or cut a figure at the request of his particular friends. I

got tired at last, and went down to the pond, where I ploughed about for a time on my skates in solitude, for the pond was empty. Then I ran up to the house to see if Jem had come back, but he had not, and I returned to the dam to wait for the school-master.

The crowd was larger than before, for everybody's work-hours were over; and the skater was still displaying himself. He was doing very difficult figures now, and I ran round to where the bank was covered with people watching him. In the minute that followed I remember three things with curious distinctness. First, that I saw Mr. Wood coming back, only one field off, and beckoned to him to be quick, because the lad was beginning to cut a double three backwards, and I wanted the school-master to see it. Secondly, that the sight of him seemed suddenly to bring to my mind that we were all on the far side of the dam, the side he thought dangerous. And thirdly, that, quickly as my eyes passed from Mr. Wood to the skater, I caught sight of a bloated-looking young man, whom we all knew as a sort of typical "bad lot," standing with another man who was a great better, and from a movement between them, it just flashed through my head that they were betting as to whether the lad would cut the double three backwards or not.

He cut one—two—and then he turned too quickly and his skate caught in the softening ice, and when

he came headlong, his head struck, and where it struck it went through. It looked so horrible that it was a relief to see him begin to struggle; but the weakened ice broke around him with every effort, and he went down.

For many a year afterwards I used to dream of his face as he sank, and of the way the ice heaved like the breast of some living thing, and fell back, and of the heavy waves that rippled over it out of that awful hole. But great as was the shock, it was small to the storm of shame and agony that came over me when I realized that every comrade who had been around the lad had saved himself by a rush to the bank, where we huddled together, a gaping crowd of foolhardy cowards, without skill to do anything or heart to dare anything to save him.

At that time it maddened me so, that I felt that if I could not help the lad I would rather be drowned in the hole with him, and I began to scramble in a foolish way down the bank, but John Binder caught me by the arm and pulled me back, and said (I suppose to soothe me),

"Yon's the school-master, sir;" and then I saw Mr. Wood fling himself over the hedge by the alder thicket (he was rather good at high jumps), and come flying along the bank towards us, when he said,

"What's the matter?"

I threw my arms round him and sobbed, "He was cutting a double three backwards, and he went in."

Mr. Wood unclasped my arms and turned to the rest.

"What have you done with him?" he said. "Did he hurt himself?"

If the crowd was cowardly and helpless, it was not indifferent; and I shall never forget the haggard faces that turned by one impulse, where a dozen grimy hands pointed—to the hole.

"He's drowned dead." "He's under t' ice." "He went right down," several men hastened to reply, but most of them only enforced the mute explanation of their pointed finger with, "He's yonder."

For yet an instant I don't think Mr. Wood believed it, and then he seized the man next to him (without looking, for he was blind with rage) and said,

"He's yonder, *and you're here?*"

As it happened, it was the man who had talked with his back to us. He was very big and very heavy, but he reeled when Mr. Wood shook him, like a feather caught by a storm.

"You were foolhardy enough an hour ago," said the school-master. "Won't one of you venture on to your own dam to help a drowning man?"

"There's none on us can swim, sir," said John Binder. "It's a bad job"—and he gave a sob that made me begin to cry again, and several other people too—"but where'd be t' use of drowning five or six more atop of him?"

"Can any of you run if you can't swim?" said the school-master. "Get a stout rope—as fast as you can, and send somebody for the doctor and a bottle of brandy, and a blanket or two to carry him home in. Jack! Hold these."

I took his watch and his purse, and he went down the bank and walked on to the ice; but after a time his feet went through as the skater's head had gone.

"It ain't a bit of use. There's nought to be done," said the bystanders: for, except those who had run to do Mr. Wood's bidding, we were all watching and all huddled closer to the edge than ever. The school-master went down on his hands and knees, on which a big lad, with his hands in his trouser-pockets, guffawed.

"What's he up to now?" he asked.

"Thee may haud thee tongue if thee can do nought," said a mill-girl who had come up. "I reckon he knows what he's efter better nor thee." She had pushed to the front, and was crouched upon the edge, and seemed very much excited. "God

bless him for trying to save t' best lad in t' village i' any fashion, say I! There's them that's nearer kin to him and not so kind."

Perhaps the strict justice of this taunt prevented a reply (for there lurks some fairness in the roughest of us), or perhaps the crowd, being chiefly men knew from experience that there are occasions when it is best to let a woman say her say.

"Ye see he's trying to spread hisself out," John Binder explained in pacific tones. "I reckon he thinks it'll bear him if he shifts half of his weight on to his hands."

The girl got nearer to the mason, and looked up at him with her eyes full of tears.

"Thank ye, John," she said. "D'ye think he'll get him out?"

"Maybe he will, my lass. He's a man that knows what he's doing. I'll say so much for him."

"Nay!" added the mason sorrowfully. "Th' ice 'll never hold him—his hand's in—and there goes his knee. Maester! maester!" he shouted, "come off! come off!" and many a voice besides mine echoed him, "Come off! come off!"

The girl got John Binder by the arm, and said hoarsely, "Fetch him off! He's a reight good 'un—over good to be drownded, if—if it's of no use." And she sat down on the bank, and pulled her mill-

shawl over her head, and cried as I had never seen any one cry before.

I was so busy watching her that I did not see that Mr. Wood had got back to the bank. Several hands were held out to help him, but he shook his head and said—"Got a knife?"

Two or three jack-knives were out in an instant. He pointed to the alder thicket. "I want two poles," he said, "sixteen feet long, if you can, and as thick as my wrist at the bottom."

"All right, sir."

He sat down on the bank, and I rushed up and took one of his cold wet hands in both mine, and said, "Please, please, don't go on any more."

"He must be dead ever so long ago," I added, repeating what I had heard.

"He hasn't been in the water ten minutes," said the school-master, laughing. "Jack! Jack! you're not half ready for travelling yet. You must learn not to lose your head and your heart and your wits and your sense of time in this fashion, if you mean to be any good at a pinch to yourself or your neighbours. Has the rope come?"

"No, sir."

"Those poles?" said the school-master, getting up.

"They're here!" I shouted, as a young forest of poles came towards us, so willing had been the owners

of the jack-knives. The thickest had been cut by the heavy man, and Mr. Wood took it first.

"Thank you, friend," he said. The man didn't speak, and he turned his back as usual, but he gave a sideways surly nod before he turned. The schoolmaster chose a second pole, and then pushed both before him right out on to the ice, in such a way that with the points touching each other they formed a sort of huge A, the thicker ends being the nearer to the bank.

"Now, Jack," said he, "pay attention; and no more blubbering. There's always plenty of time for giving way *afterwards*."

As he spoke he scrambled on to the poles, and began to work himself and them over the ice, wriggling in a kind of snake fashion in the direction of the hole. We watched him breathlessly, but within ten yards of the hole he stopped. He evidently dared not go on; and the same thought seized all of us—"Can he get back?" Spreading his legs and arms he now lay flat upon the poles, peering towards the hole as if to try if he could see anything of the drowning man. It was only for an instant, then he rolled over on to the rotten ice, smashed through, and sank more suddenly than the skater had done.

The mill-girl jumped up with a wild cry and rushed to the water, but John Binder pulled her back

as he had pulled me. Martha, our housemaid, said afterwards (and was ready to take oath on the gilt-edged Church service my mother gave her) that the girl was so violent that it took fourteen men to hold her; but Martha wasn't there, and I only saw two, one at each arm, and when she fainted they laid her down and left her, and hurried back to see what was going on. For tenderness is an acquired grace in men, and it was not common in our neighbourhood.

What was going on was that John Binder had torn his hat from his head and was saying, "I don't know if there's aught we *can* do, but I can't go home myself and leave him yonder. I'm a married man with a family, but I don't vally *my* life if——"

But the rest of this speech was drowned in noise more eloquent than words, and then it broke into cries of "See thee!—It is—it's t' maester! and he has —no!—yea!—he *has*—he's gotten him. Polly, lass! he's fetched up thy Arthur by t' hair of his heead."

It was strictly true. The school-master told me afterwards how it was. When he found that the ice would bear no longer, he rolled into the water on purpose, but, to his horror, he felt himself seized by the drowning man, which pulled him suddenly down. The lad had risen once, it seems, though we had not seen him, and had got a breath of air at the hole, but the edge broke in his numbed fingers, and he sank

again and drifted under the ice. When he rose the second time, by an odd chance it was just where Mr. Wood broke in, and his clutch of the school-master nearly cost both their lives.

"If ever," said Mr. Wood, when he was talking about it afterwards, "if ever, Jack, when you're out in the world you get under water, and somebody tries to save you, when he grips *you*, don't seize *him*, if you can muster self-control to avoid it. If you cling to him, you'll either drown both, or you'll force him to do as I did—throttle you, to keep you quiet."

"Did you?" I gasped.

"Of course I did. I got him by the throat and dived with him—the only real risk I ran, as I did not know how deep the dam was."

"It's an old quarry," said I.

"I know now. We went down well, and I squeezed his throat as we went. As soon as he was still we naturally rose, and I turned on my back and got him by the head. I looked about for the hole, and saw it glimmering above me like a moon in a fog, and then up we came."

When they did come up, our joy was so great that for the moment we felt as if all was accomplished; but far the hardest part really was to come. When the school-master clutched the poles once more, and drove one under the lad's arms and under his own

left arm, and so kept his burden afloat whilst he broke a swimming path for himself with the other, our admiration of his cleverness gave place to the blessed thought that it might now be possible to help him. The sight of the poles seemed suddenly to suggest it, and in a moment every spare pole had been seized, and, headed by our heavy friend, eight or ten men plunged in, and, smashing the ice before them, waded out to meet the school-master. On the bank we were dead silent; in the water they neither stopped nor spoke till it was breast high round their leader.

I have often thought, and have always felt quite sure, that if the heavy man had gone on till the little grey waves and the bits of ice closed over him, not a soul of those who followed him would—nay, *could*—have turned back. Heroism, like cowardice, is contagious, and I do not think there was one of us by that time who would have feared to dare or grudged to die.

As it was, the heavy man stood still and shouted for the rope. It had come, and perhaps it was not the smallest effect of the day's teaching, that those on the bank paid it out at once to those in the water till it reached the leader, without waiting to ask why he wanted it. The grace of obedience is slow to be learnt by disputatious northmen, but we had had some hard teaching that afternoon.

When the heavy man got the rope he tied the middle part of it round himself, and, coiling the shorter end, he sent it, as if it had been a quoit, skimming over the ice towards the school-master. As it unwound itself it slid along, and after a struggle Mr. Wood grasped it. I fancy he fastened it round the lad's body; and got his own hands freer to break the ice before them. Then the heavy man turned, and the long end of the line, passing from hand to hand in the water, was seized upon the bank by every one who could get hold of it. I never was more squeezed and buffeted in my life; but we fairly fought for the privilege of touching if it were but a strand of the rope that dragged them in.

And a flock of wild birds, resting on their journey at the other end of the mill-dam, rose in terror and pursued their seaward way; so wild and so prolonged were the echoes of that strange, speechless cry in which collective man gives vent to overpowering emotion.

It is odd, when one comes to think of it, but I know it is true, for two sensible words would have stuck in my own throat and choked me, but I cheered till I could cheer no longer.

CHAPTER IX.

"In doubtful matters Courage may do much:—In desperate —Patience."—*Old Proverb.*

THE young skater duly recovered, and thence-forward Mr. Wood's popularity in the village was established, and the following summer he started a swimming-class, to which the young men flocked with more readiness than they commonly showed for efforts made to improve them.

For my own part I had so realized, to my shame, that one may feel very adventurous and yet not know how to venture or what to venture in the time of need, that my whole heart was set upon getting the school-master to teach me to swim and to dive, with any other lessons in preparedness of body and mind which I was old enough to profit by. And if the true tales of his own experiences were more interesting than the Penny Numbers, it was better still to feel that one was qualifying in one's own proper person for a life of adventure.

During the winter Mr. Wood built a boat, which

was christened the *Adela*, after his wife. It was an interesting process to us all. I hung about and did my best to be helpful, and both Jem and I spoiled our everyday trousers, and rubbed the boat's sides, the day she was painted. It was from the *Adela* that Jem and I had our first swimming-lessons, Mr. Wood lowering us with a rope under our arms, by which he gave us as much support as was needed, whilst he taught us how to strike out.

We had swimming-races on the canal, and having learned to swim and dive without our clothes, we learnt to do so in them, and found it much more difficult for swimming and easier for diving. It was then that the trousers we had damaged when the *Adela* was built came in most usefully, and saved us from having to attempt the at least equally difficult task of persuading my mother to let us spoil good ones in an amusement which had the unpardonable quality of being "very odd."

Dear old Charlie had as much fun out of the boat as we had, though he could not learn to dive. He used to look as if every minute of a pull up the canal on a sunny evening gave him pleasure; and the brown Irish spaniel Jem gave him used to swim after the boat and look up in Charlie's face as if it knew how he enjoyed it. And later on, Mr. Wood taught Bob Furniss to row and Charlie to steer; so

that Charlie could sometimes go out and feel quite free to stop the boat when and where he liked. That was after he started so many collections of insects and water-weeds, and shells, and things you can only see under a microscope. Bob and he used to take all kinds of pots and pans and nets and dippers with them, so that Charlie could fish up what he wanted, and keep things separate. He was obliged to keep the live things he got for his fresh-water aquarium in different jam-pots, because he could never be sure which would eat up which till he knew them better, and the water-scorpions and the dragon-fly larvæ ate everything. Bob Furniss did not mind pulling in among the reeds and waiting as long as you wanted. Mr. Wood sometimes wanted to get back to his work, but Bob never wanted to get back to his. And he was very good-natured about getting into the water and wading and grubbing for things; indeed, I think he got to like it.

At first Mr. Wood had been rather afraid of trusting Charlie with him. He thought Bob might play tricks with the boat, even though he knew how to manage her, when there was only one helpless boy with him. But Mrs. Furniss said, "Nay! Our Bob's a bad 'un, but he's not one of that sort, he'll not plague them that's afflicted." And she was quite right; for though his father said he could be trusted

with nothing else, we found he could be trusted with Cripple Charlie.

It was two days before the summer holidays came to an end that Charlie asked me to come down to the farm and help him to put away his fern collection and a lot of other things into the places that he had arranged for them in his room; for now that the school-room was wanted again, he could not leave his papers and boxes about there. Charlie lived at the farm altogether now. He was better there than on the moors, so he boarded there and went home for visits. The room Mrs. Wood had given him was the one where the old miser had slept. In a memorandum left with his will it appeared that he had expressed a wish that the furniture of that room should not be altered, which was how they knew it was his. So Mrs. Wood had kept the curious old oak bed (the back of which was fastened into the wall), and an old oak press, with a great number of drawers with brass handles to them, and all the queer furniture that she found there, just as it was. Even the brass warming-pan was only rubbed and put back in its place, and the big bellows were duly hung up by the small fire-place. But everything was so polished up and cleaned, the walls re-papered with a soft grey-green paper spangled with dog-daisies, and the room so brightened up with fresh blinds and bedclothes,

and a bit of bright carpet, that it did not look in the least dismal, and Charlie was very proud and very fond of it. It had two windows, one where the bee-hive was, and one very sunny one, where he had a balm of Gilead that Isaac's wife gave him, and his old medicine-bottles full of cuttings on the upper ledge. The old women used to send him "slippings" off their fairy roses and myrtles and fuchsias, and they rooted very well in that window, there was so much sun.

Charlie had only just begun a fern collection, and I had saved my pocket-money (I did not want it for anything else) and had bought him several quires of cartridge-paper; and Dr. Brown had given him a packet of medicine-labels to cut up into strips to fasten his specimens in with, and the collection looked very well and very scientific; and all that remained was to find a good place to put it away in. The drawers of the press were of all shapes and sizes, but there were two longish very shallow ones that just matched each other, and when I pulled one of them out, and put the fern-papers in, they fitted exactly, and the drawer just held half the collection. I called Charlie to look, and he hobbled up on his crutches and was delighted, but he said he should like to put the others in himself, so I got him into a chair, and shut up the full drawer and pulled out the

empty one, and went down-stairs for the two mole-skins we were curing, and the glue-pot, and the toffy-tin, and some other things that had to be cleared out of the school-room now the holidays were over.

When I came back the fern-papers were still outside, and Charlie was looking flushed and cross.

"I don't know how you managed," he said, "but I can't get them in. This drawer must be shorter than the other; it doesn't go nearly so far back."

"Oh yes, it does, Charlie!" I insisted, for I felt as certain as people always do feel about little details of that kind. "The drawers are exactly alike; you can't have got the fern-sheets quite flush with each other," and I began to arrange the trayful of things I had brought up-stairs in the bottom of the cupboard.

"I *know* it's the drawer," I heard Charlie say. ("He's as obstinate as possible," thought I.)

Then I heard him banging at the wood with his fists and his crutch. ("He *is* in a temper!" was my mental comment.) After this my attention was distracted for a second or two by seeing what I thought was a bit of toffy left in the tin, and biting it and finding it was a piece of sheet-glue. I had not spit out all the disgust of it, when Charlie called me in low, awe-struck tones: "Jack! come here. Quick!"

I ran to him. The drawer was open, but it

seemed to have another drawer inside it, a long, narrow, shallow one.

"I hit the back, and this sprang out," said Charlie. "It's a secret drawer—and look!"

I did look. The secret drawer was closely packed with rolls of thin leaflets, which we were old enough to recognize as bank-notes, and with little bags of wash-leather; and when Charlie opened the little bags they were filled with gold.

There was a paper with the money, written by the old miser, to say that it was a codicil to his will, and that the money was all for Mrs. Wood. Why he had not left it to her in the will itself seemed very puzzling, but his lawyer (whom the Woods consulted about it) said that he always did things in a very eccentric way, but generally for some sort of reason, even if it were rather a freaky one, and that perhaps he thought that the relations would be less spiteful at first if they did not know about the money, and that Mrs. Wood would soon find it, if she used and valued his old press.

I don't quite know whether there was any fuss with the relations about this part of the bequest, but I suppose the lawyer managed it all right, for the Woods got the money and gave up the school. But they kept the old house, and bought some more land, and Walnut-tree Academy became Walnut-tree

Farm once more. And Cripple Charlie lived on with them, and he was so happy, it really seemed as if my dear mother was right when she said to my father, "I am so pleased, my dear, for that poor boy's sake, I can hardly help crying. He's got two homes and two fathers and mothers, where many a young man has none, as if to make good his affliction to him."

It puzzles me, even now, to think how my father could have sent Jem and me to Crayshaw's school. (Nobody ever called him Mr. Crayshaw except the parents of pupils who lived at a distance. In the neighbourhood he and his whole establishment were lumped under the one word *Crayshaw's*, and as a farmer hard by once said to me, "Crayshaw's is universally disrespected.")

I do not think it was merely because "Crayshaw's" was cheap that we were sent there, though my father had so few reasons to give for his choice that he quoted that among them. A man with whom he had had business dealings (which gave him much satisfaction for some years, and more dissatisfaction afterwards) did really, I think, persuade my father to send us to this school, one evening when they were dining together.

Few things are harder to guess at than the grounds on which an Englishman of my father's type "makes

up his mind"; and yet the question is an important one, for an idea once lodged in his head, a conviction once as much his own as the family acres, and you will as soon part him from the one as from the other. I have known little matters of domestic improvements, in which my mother's comfort was concerned and her experience conclusive, for which he grudged a few shillings, and was absolutely impenetrable by her persuasions and representations. And I have known him waste pounds on things of the most curious variety, foisted on him by advertising agents without knowledge, trial, or rational ground of confidence. I suppose that persistency, a glibber tongue than he himself possessed, a mass of printed rubbish which always looks imposing to the unliterary, that primitive combination of authoritativeness and hospitality which makes some men as ready to say Yes to a stranger as they are to say No at home, and perhaps some lack of moral courage, may account for it. I can clearly remember how quaintly sheepish my father used to look after committing some such folly, and how, after the first irrepressible fall of countenance, my mother would have defended him against anybody else's opinion, let alone her own. Young as I was I could feel that, and had a pretty accurate estimate of the value of the moral lecture on faith in one's fellow-creatures, which was an unfailing outward sign of my father's

inward conviction that he had been taken in by a rogue. I knew too, well enough, that my mother's hasty and earnest Amen to this discourse was an equally reliable token of her knowledge that my father sorely needed defending, and some instinct made me aware also that my father knew that this was so. That he knew that it was that tender generosity towards one's beloved, in which so many of her sex so far exceeds ours, and not an intellectual conviction of his wisdom, which made her support what he had done, and that feeling this he felt dissatisfied, and snapped at her accordingly.

The dislike my dear mother took to the notion of our going to Crayshaw's only set seals to our fate, and the manner of her protests was not more fortunate than the matter. She was timid and vacillating from wifely habit, whilst motherly anxiety goaded her to be persistent and almost irritable on the subject. Habitually regarding her own wishes and views as worthless, she quoted the Woods at every turn of her arguments, which was a mistake, for my father was sufficiently like the rest of his neighbours not to cotton very warmly to people whose tastes, experiences, and lines of thought were so much out of the common as those of the ex-convict and his wife. Moreover, he had made up his mind, and when one has done that, he is proof against seventy men who can render a reason.

To rumours which accused "Crayshaw's" of undue severity, of discomfort, of bad teaching and worse manners, my father opposed arguments which he allowed were "old-fashioned" and which were far-fetched from the days of our great-grandfather.

A strict school-master was a good school-master, and if more parents were as wise as Solomon on the subject of the rod, Old England would not be discredited by such a namby-pamby race as young men of the present day seemed by all accounts to be. It was high time the boys did rough it a bit; would my mother have them always tied to her apron-strings? Great Britain would soon be Little Britain if boys were to be brought up like young ladies. As to teaching, it was the fashion to make a fuss about it, and a pretty pass learning brought some folks to, to judge by the papers and all one heard. His own grandfather lived to ninety-seven, and died sitting in his chair, in a bottle-green coat and buff breeches. He wore a pig-tail to the day of his death, and never would be contradicted by anybody. He had often told my father that at the school *he* went to, the master signed the receipts for his money with a cross, but the usher was a bit of a scholar, and the boys had cream to their porridge on Sundays. And the old gentleman managed his own affairs to ninety-seven, and threw the doctor's medicine-bottles out of the

window then. He died without a doubt on his mind or a debt on his books, and my father (taking a pinch out of Great-Grandfather's snuff-box) hoped Jem and I might do as well.

In short, we were sent to "Crayshaw's."

It was not a happy period of my life. It was not a good or wholesome period; and I am not fond of recalling it. The time came when I shrank from telling Charlie everything, almost as if he had been a girl. His life was lived in such a different atmosphere, under such different conditions. I could not trouble him, and I did not believe he could make allowances for me. But on our first arrival I wrote him a long letter (Jem never wrote letters), and the other day he showed it to me. It was a first impression, but a sufficiently vivid and truthful one, so I give it here.

"CRAYSHAW'S (for that's what they call it here, and a beastly hole it is).

"*Monday.*

"MY DEAR OLD CHARLIE,—We came earlier than was settled, for Father got impatient and there was nothing to stop us, but I don't think old Crayshaw liked our coming so soon. You never saw such a place, it's so dreary. A boy showed us straight into the school-room. There are three rows of double

desks running down the room and disgustingly dirty, I don't know what Mrs. Wood would say, and old Crayshaw's desk is in front of the fire, so that he can see all the boys sideways, and it just stops any heat coming to them. And there he was, and I don't think Father liked the look of him particularly, you never saw an uglier. Such a flaming face and red eyes like Bob Furniss's ferret and great big whiskers; but I'll make you a picture of him, at least I'll make two pictures, for Lewis Lorraine says he's got no beard on Sundays, and rather a good one on Saturdays. Lorraine is a very rum fellow, but I like him. It was he showed us in, and he did catch it afterwards, but he only makes fun of it. Old Crayshaw's desk had got a lot of canes on one side of it and a most beastly dirty snuffy red and green handkerchief on the other, and an ink-pot in the middle. He made up to Father like anything and told such thumpers. He said there were six boys in one room, but really there's twelve. Jem and I sleep together. There's nothing to wash in and no prayers. If you say them you get boots at your head, and one hit Jem behind the ear, so I pulled his sleeve and said, 'Get up, you can say them in bed.' But you know Jem, and he said, 'Wait till I've done, *God bless Father and Mother*,' and when he had, he went in and fought, and I

backed him up, and then old Crayshaw found us, and oh, how he did beat us!

"—— *Wednesday.* Old Snuffy is a regular brute, and I don't care if he finds this and sees what I say. But he won't, for the milkman is taking it. He always does if you can pay him. But I've put most of my money into the bank. Three of the top boys have a bank, and we all have to deposit, only I kept fourpence in one of my boots. They give us bank-notes for a penny and a halfpenny; they make them themselves. The sweet-shop takes them. They only give you eleven penny notes for a shilling in the bank, or else it would burst. At dinner we have a lot of pudding to begin with, and it's very heavy. You can hardly eat anything afterwards. The first day Lorraine said quite out loud and very polite, 'Did you say *duff before meat*, young gentlemen?' and I couldn't help laughing, and old Snuffy beat his head horridly with his dirty fists. But Lorraine minds nothing; he says he knows old Snuffy will kill him some day, but he says he doesn't want to live, for his father and mother are dead; he only wants to catch old Snuffy in three more booby-traps before he dies. He's caught him in four already. You see, when old Snuffy is cat-walking he wears goloshes that he may sneak about better, and the way Lorraine

makes booby-traps is by balancing cans of water on the door when it's ajar, so that he gets doused, and the can falls on his head, and strings across the bottom of the door, not far from the ground, so that he catches his goloshes and comes down. The other fellows say that old Crayshaw had a lot of money given him in trust for Lorraine, and he's spent it all, and Lorraine has no one to stick up for him, and that's why Crayshaw hates him.

"—— *Saturday.* I could not catch the milkman, and now I've got your letter, though Snuffy read it first. Jem and I cry dreadful in bed. That's the comfort of being together. I'll try and be as good as I can, but you don't know what this place is. It's very different to the farm. Do you remember the row about that book Horace Simpson got? I wish you could see the books the boys have here. At least I don't wish it, for I wish I didn't look at them, the milkman brings them; he always will if you can pay him. When I saw old Snuffy find one in Smith's desk, I expected he would half kill him, but he didn't do much to him, he only took the book away; and Lorraine says he never does beat them much for that, because he doesn't want them to leave off buying them, because he wants them himself. Don't tell the Woods this. Don't tell Mother Jem and I cry, or else she'll be miserable. I don't so much mind

the beatings (Lorraine says you get hard in time), nor the washing at the sink—nor the duff puddings—but it is such a beastly hole, and he is such an old brute, and I feel so dreadful I can't tell you. Give my love to Mrs. Wood and to Mr. Wood, and to Carlo and to Mary Anne, and to your dear dear self, and to Isaac when you see him.

"And I am your affectionate friend,

"JACK.

"P.S. Jem sends his best love, and he's got two black eyes.

"P.S. No. 2. You would be sorry for Lorraine if you knew him. Sometimes I'm afraid he'll kill himself, for he says there's really nothing in the Bible about suicide. So I said—killing yourself is as bad as killing anybody else. So he said—is stealing from yourself as bad as stealing from anybody else? And we had a regular *argue*. Some of the boys argle-bargle on Sundays, he says, but most of them fight. When they differ, they put tin-tacks with the heads downwards on each other's places on the forms in school, and if they run into you and you scream, old Snuffy beats you. The milkman brings them, by the half-ounce, with very sharp points, if you can pay him. Most of the boys are a horrid lot, and so dirty. Lorraine is as dirty as the rest, and I asked him why,

and he said it was because he'd thrown up the sponge; but he got rather red, and he's washed himself cleaner this morning. He says he has an uncle in India, and some time ago he wrote to him, and told him about Crayshaw's, and gave the milkman a diamond pin, that had been his father's, and Snuffy didn't know about, to post it with plenty of stamps, but he thinks he can't have put plenty on, for no answer ever came. I've told him I'll post another one for him in the holidays. Don't say anything about this back in your letters. He reads 'em all.

"——*Monday.* I've caught the milkman at last, he'll take it this evening. The lessons here are regular rubbish. I'm so glad I've a good knife, for if you have you can dig holes in your desk to put collections in. The boy next to me has earwigs, but you have to keep a look-out, or he puts them in your ears. I turned up a stone near the sink this morning, and got five wood-lice for mine. It's considered a very good collection."

CHAPTER X.

"But none inquired how Peter used the rope,
Or what the bruise that made the stripling stoop;
None could the ridges on his back behold,
None sought him shiv'ring in the winter's cold.
* * * * * *
The pitying women raised a clamour round."

CRABBE, *The Borough.*

A GREAT many people say that all suffering is good for one, and I am sure pain does improve one very often, and in many ways. It teaches one sympathy, it softens and it strengthens. But I cannot help thinking that there are some evil experiences which only harden and stain. The best I can say for what we endured at Crayshaw's is that it *was* experience, and so I suppose could not fail to teach one something, which, as Jem says, was "more than Snuffy did."

The affection with which I have heard men speak of their school-days and school-masters makes me know that Mr. Crayshaw was not a common type of pedagogue. He was not a common type of man, happily;

but I have met other specimens in other parts of the world in which his leading quality was as fully developed, though their lives had nothing in common with his except the opportunities of irresponsible power.

The old wounds are scars now, it is long past and over, and I am grown up, and have roughed it in the world; but I say quite deliberately that I believe that Mr. Crayshaw was not merely a harsh man, uncultured and inconsiderate, having need and greed of money, taking pupils cheap, teaching them little or nothing, and keeping a kind of rough order with too much flogging,—but that the mischief of him was that he was possessed by a passion (not the less fierce because it was unnatural) which grew with indulgence and opportunity, as other passions grow, and that this was a passion for cruelty.

One does not rough it long in this wicked world without seeing more cruelty both towards human beings and towards animals than one cares to think about; but a large proportion of common cruelty comes of ignorance, bad tradition and uncultured sympathies. Some painful outbreaks of inhumanity, where one would least expect it, are no doubt strictly to be accounted for by disease. But over and above these common and these exceptional instances, one cannot escape the conviction that irresponsible power

is opportunity in all hands and a direct temptation in some to cruelty, and that it affords horrible development to those morbid cases in which cruelty becomes a passion.

That there should ever come a thirst for blood in men as well as tigers, is bad enough but conceivable when linked with deadly struggle, or at the wild dictates of revenge. But a lust for cruelty growing fiercer by secret and unchecked indulgence, a hideous pleasure in seeing and inflicting pain, seems so inhuman a passion that we shrink from acknowledging that this is ever so.

And if it belonged to the past alone, to barbarous despotisms or to savage life, one might wisely forget it; for the dark pages of human history are unwholesome as well as unpleasant reading, unless the mind be very sane in a body very sound. But those in whose hands lie the destinies of the young and of the beasts who serve and love us, of the weak, the friendless, the sick and the insane, have not, alas! this excuse for ignoring the black records of man's abuse of power!

The records of its abuse in the savage who loads women's slender shoulders with his burdens, leaves his sick to the wayside jackal, and knocks his aged father on the head when he is past work; the brutality of slave-drivers, the iniquities of vice-maddened

Eastern despots;—such things those who never have to deal with them may afford to forget.

But men who act for those who have no natural protectors, or have lost the power of protecting themselves, who legislate for those who have no voice in the making of laws, and for the brute creation, which we win to our love and domesticate for our convenience; who apprentice pauper boys and girls, who meddle with the matters of weak women, sick persons, and young children, are bound to face a far sadder issue. That even in these days, when human love again and again proves itself not only stronger than death, but stronger than all the selfish hopes of life; when the everyday manners of everyday men are concessions of courtesy to those who have not the strength to claim it; when children and pet animals are spoiled to grotesqueness; when the good deeds of priest and physician, nurse and teacher, surpass all earthly record of them—man, as man, is no more to be trusted with unchecked power than hitherto.

The secret histories of households, where power should be safest in the hands of love; of hospitals, of schools, of orphanages, of poorhouses, of lunatic-asylums, of religious communities founded for God's worship and man's pity, of institutions which assume the sacred title as well as the responsibilities of Home—from the single guardian of some rural idiot to the

great society which bears the blessed Name of Jesus—have not each and all their dark stories, their hushed-up scandals, to prove how dire is the need of public opinion without, and of righteous care within, that what is well begun should be well continued?

If any one doubts this, let him pause on each instance, one by one, and think of what he has seen, and heard, and read, and known of; and he will surely come to the conviction that human nature cannot, even in the very service of charity, be safely trusted with the secret exercise of irresponsible power, and that no light can be too fierce to beat upon and purify every spot where the weak are committed to the tender mercies of the consciences of the strong.

Mr. Crayshaw's conscience was not a tender one, and very little light came into his out-of-the-way establishment, and no check whatever upon his cruelty. It had various effects on the different boys. It killed one in my day, and the doctor (who had been "in a difficulty" some years back, over a matter through which Mr. Crayshaw helped him with bail and testimony) certified to heart disease, and we all had our pocket-handkerchiefs washed, and went to the funeral. And Snuffy had cards printed with a black edge, and several angels and a broken lily, and the hymn—

" Death has been here and borne away
A brother from our side ;
Just in the morning of his day,
As young as we he died."

—and sent them to all the parents. But the pupils had to pay for the stamps. And my dear mother cried dreadfully, first because she was so sorry for the boy, and secondly because she ever had felt uncharitably towards Mr. Crayshaw.

Crayshaw's cruelty crushed others, it made liars and sneaks of boys naturally honest, and it produced in Lorraine an unchildlike despair that was almost grand, so far was the spirit above the flesh in him. But I think its commonest and strangest result was to make the boys bully each other.

One of the least cruel of the tyrannies the big boys put upon the little ones, sometimes bore very hardly on those who were not strong. They used to ride races on our backs and have desperate mounted battles and tournaments. In many a playground and home since then I have seen boys tilt and race, and steeplechase, with smaller boys upon their backs, and plenty of wholesome rough-and-tumble in the game ; and it has given me a twinge of heartache to think how, even when we were at play, Crayshaw's baneful spirit cursed us with its example, so that the big and strong could not be happy except at the expense of the little and weak.

For it was the big ones who rode the little ones, with neatly-cut ash-sticks and clumsy spurs. I can see them now, with the thin legs of the small boys tottering under them, like a young donkey overridden by a coal-heaver.

I was a favourite horse, for I was active and nimble, and (which was more to the point) well made. It was the shambling, ill-proportioned lads who suffered most. The biggest boy in school rode me, as a rule, but he was not at all a bad bully, so I was lucky. He never spurred me, and he boasted of my willingness and good paces. I am sure he did not know, I don't suppose he ever stopped to think, how bad it was for me, or what an aching lump of prostration I felt when it was over. The day I fainted after winning a steeplechase, he turned a bucket of cold water over me, and as this roused me into a tingling vitality of pain, he was quite proud of his treatment, and told me nothing brought a really good horse round after a hard day like a bucket of clean water. And (so much are we the creatures of our conditions!) I remember feeling something approaching to satisfaction at the reflection that I had "gone till I dropped," and had been brought round after the manner of the best-conducted stables.

It was not that that made Jem and me run away. (For we did run away.) Overstrain and collapse, ill-

usage short of torture, hard living and short commons, one got a certain accustomedness to, according to the merciful law which within certain limits makes a second nature for us out of use and wont. The one pain that knew no pause, and allowed of no revival, the evil that overbore us, mind and body, was the evil of constant dread. Upon us little boys fear lay always, and the terror of it was that it was uncertain. What would come next, and from whom, we never knew.

It was I who settled we should run away. I did it the night that Jem gave in, and would do nothing but cry noiselessly into his sleeve and wish he was dead. So I settled it and told Lorraine. I wanted him to come too, but he would not. He pretended that he did not care, and he said he had nowhere to go to. But he got into Snuffy's very own room at daybreak whilst we stood outside and heard him snoring; and very loud he must have snored too, for I could hear my heart thumping so I should not have thought I could have heard anything else. And Lorraine took the back-door key off the drawers, and let us out, and took it back again. He feared nothing. There was a walnut-tree by the gate, and Jem said, "Suppose we do our faces like gipsies, so that nobody may know us." (For Jem was terribly frightened of being taken back.) So we found some old bits of

peel and rubbed our cheeks, but we dared not linger long over it, and I said, "We'd better get further on, and we can hide if we hear steps or wheels." So we took each other's hands, and for nearly a mile we ran as hard as we could go, looking back now and then over our shoulders, like the picture of Christian and Hopeful running away from the Castle of Giant Despair.

We were particularly afraid of the milkman, for milkmen drive about early, and he had taken a runaway boy back to Crayshaw's years before, and Snuffy gave him five shillings. They said he once helped another boy to get away, but it was a big one, who gave him his gold watch. He would do anything if you paid him. Jem and I had each a little bundle in a handkerchief, but nothing in them that the milkman would have cared for. We managed very well, for we got behind a wall when he went by, and I felt so much cheered up I thought we should get home that day, far as it was. But when we got back into the road, I found that Jem was limping, for Snuffy had stamped on his foot when Jem had had it stuck out beyond the desk, when he was writing; and the running had made it worse, and at last he sat down by the roadside, and said I was to go on home and send back for him. It was not very likely I would leave him to the chance of being pursued by

Mr. Crayshaw; but there he sat, and I thought I never should have persuaded him to get on my back, for good-natured as he is, Jem is as obstinate as a pig. But I said, "What's the use of my having been first horse with the heaviest weight in school, if I can't carry you?" So he got up and I carried him a long way, and then a cart overtook us, and we got a lift home. And they knew us quite well, which shows how little use walnut-juice is, and it is disgusting to get off.

I think, as it happened, it was very unfortunate that we had discoloured our faces; for though my mother was horrified at our being so thin and pinched-looking, my father said that of course we looked frights with brown daubs all over our cheeks and necks. But then he never did notice people looking ill. He was very angry indeed, at first, about our running away, and would not listen to what we said. He was angry too with my dear mother, because she believed us, and called Snuffy a bad man and a brute. And he ordered the dog-cart to be brought round, and said that Martha was to give us some breakfast, and that we might be thankful to get that instead of a flogging, for that when *he* ran away from school to escape a thrashing, his father gave him one thrashing while the dog-cart was being brought round, and drove him straight back to school, where the school-master gave him another.

"And a very good thing for me," said my father, buttoning his coat, whilst my mother and Martha went about crying, and Jem and I stood silent. If we were to go back, the more we told, the worse would be Snuffy's revenge. An unpleasant hardness was beginning to creep over me. "The next time I run away," was my thought, "I shall not run home." But with this came a rush of regret for Jem's sake. I knew that Crayshaw's did more harm to him than to me, and almost involuntarily I put my arms round him, thinking that if they would only let him stay, I could go back and bear anything, like Lewis Lorraine. Jem had been crying, and when he hid his face on my shoulder, and leaned against me, I thought it was for comfort, but he got heavier and heavier, till I called out, and he rolled from my arms and was caught in my father's. He had been standing about on the bad foot, and pain and weariness and hunger and fright overpowered him, and he had fainted.

The dog-cart was counter-ordered, and Jem was put to bed, and Martha served me a breakfast that would have served six full-grown men. I ate far more than satisfied me, but far less than satisfied Martha, who seemed to hope that cold fowl and boiled eggs, fried bacon and pickled beef, plain cakes and currant cakes, jam and marmalade, buttered

toast, strong tea and unlimited sugar and yellow cream, would atone for the past in proportion to the amount I ate, if it did not fatten me under her eyes. I really think I spent the rest of the day in stupor. I am sure it was not till the following morning that I learned the decision to which my father had come about us.

Jem was too obviously ill to be anywhere at present but at home; and my father decided that he would not send him back to Crayshaw's at all, but to a much more expensive school in the south of England, to which the parson of our parish was sending one of his sons. I was to return to Crayshaw's at once; he could not afford the expensive school for us both, and Jem was the eldest. Besides which, he was not going to countenance rebellion in any school to which he sent his sons, or to insult a man so highly recommended to him as Mr. Crayshaw had been. There certainly seemed to have been some severity, and the boys seemed to be a very rough lot; but Jem would fight, and if he gave he must take. His great-grandfather was just the same, and *he* fought the Putney Pet when he was five-and-twenty, and his parents thought he was sitting quietly at his desk in Fetter Lane.

I loved Jem too well to be jealous of him, but I was not the less conscious of the tender tone in which

my father always spoke even of his faults, and of the way it stiffened and cooled when he added that I was not so ready with my fists, but that I was as fond of my own way as Jem was of a fight; but that setting up for being unlike other people didn't do for school life, and that the Woods had done me no kindness by making a fool of me. He added, however, that he should request Mr. Crayshaw, as a personal favour, that I should receive no punishment for running away, as I had suffered sufficiently already.

We had told very little of the true history of Crayshaw's before Jem fainted, and I felt no disposition to further confidences. I took as cheerful a farewell of my mother as I could, for her sake; and put on a good deal of swagger and "don't care" to console Jem. He said, "You're as plucky as Lorraine," and then his eyes shut again. He was too ill to think much, and I kissed his head and left him. After which I got stoutly into the dog-cart, and we drove back up the dreary hills down which Jem and I had run away.

That Snuffy was bland to cringing before my father did not give me hope that I should escape his direst revenge; and the expression of Lorraine's face showed me, by its sympathy, what *he* expected. But we were both wrong, and for reasons which we then knew nothing about.

Cruelty was, as I have said, Mr. Crayshaw's ruling passion, but it was not his only vice. There was a whispered tradition that he had once been in jail for a misuse of his acquirements in the art of penmanship; and if you heard his name cropping up in the confidential conversation of such neighbours as small farmers, the postman, the parish overseer, and the like, it was sure to be linked with unpleasingly suggestive expressions, such as—"a dirty bit of business," "a nasty job that," "an awkward affair," "very near got into trouble," "a bit of bother about it, but Driver and Quills pulled him through; theirs isn't a nice business, and they're men of t' same feather as Crayshaw, so I reckon they're friends." Many such hints have I heard, for the 'White Lion' was next door to the sweet-shop, and in summer, refreshment of a sober kind, with conversation to match, was apt to be enjoyed on the benches outside. The good wives of the neighbourhood used no such euphuisms as their more prudent husbands, when they spoke of Crayshaw's. Indeed one of the whispered anecdotes of Snuffy's past was of a hushed-up story that was just saved from becoming a scandal, but in reference to which Mr. Crayshaw was even more narrowly saved from a crowd of women who had taken the too-tardy law into their own hands. I remember myself the retreat of an unpaid washerwoman from the back premises of

Crayshaw's on one occasion, and the unmistakable terms in which she expressed her opinions.

"Don't tell me! I know Crayshaw's well enough; such folks is a curse to a country-side, but judgment overtakes 'em at last."

"Judgment," as the good woman worded it, kept threatening Mr. Crayshaw long before it overtook him, as it is apt to disturb scoundrels who keep a hypocritical good name above their hidden misdeeds. As it happened, at the very time Jem and I ran away from him, Mr. Crayshaw himself was living in terror of one or two revelations, and to be deserted by two of his most respectably connected boys was an ill-timed misfortune. The countenance my father had been so mistaken as to afford to his establishment was very important to him, for we were the only pupils from within fifty miles, and our parents' good word conetituted an "unexceptionable reference."

Thus it was that Snuffy pleaded humbly (but in vain) for the return of Jem, and that he not only promised that I should not suffer, but to my amazement kept his word.

Judgment lingered over the head of Crayshaw's for two years longer, and I really think my being there had something to do with maintaining its tottering reputation. I was almost the only lad in the school whose parents were alive and at hand and in a good

position, and my father's name stifled scandal. Most of the others were orphans, being cheaply educated by distant relatives or guardians, or else the sons of poor widows who were easily bamboozled by Snuffy's fluent letters, and the religious leaflets which it was his custom to enclose. (In several of these cases, he was "managing" the poor women's "affairs" for them.) One or two boys belonged to people living abroad. Indeed, the worst bully in the school was a half-caste, whose smile, when he showed his gleaming teeth, boded worse than any other boy's frown. He was a wonderful acrobat, and could do extraordinary tricks of all sorts. My being nimble and ready made me very useful to him as a confederate in the exhibitions which his intense vanity delighted to give on half-holidays, and kept me in his good graces till I was old enough to take care of myself. Oh, how every boy who dreaded him applauded at these entertainments! And what dangerous feats I performed, every other fear being lost in the fear of him! I owe him no grudge for what he forced me to do (though I have had to bear real fire without flinching when he failed in a conjuring trick, which should only have simulated the real thing); what I learned from him has come in so useful since, that I forgive him all.

I was there for two years longer. Snuffy bullied me less, and hated me the more. I knew it, and he

knew that I knew it. It was a hateful life, but I am sure the influence of a good home holds one up in very evil paths. Every time we went back to our respective schools my father gave us ten shillings, and told us to mind our books, and my mother kissed us and made us promise we would say our prayers every day. I could not bear to break my promise, though I used to say them in bed (the old form we learnt from her), and often in such a very unfit frame of mind, that they were what it is very easy to call "a mockery."

God knows (Who alone knows the conditions under which each soul blunders and spells on through life's hard lessons) if they were a mockery. *I* know they were unworthy to be offered to Him, but that the habit helped to keep me straight I am equally sure. Then I had a good home to go to during the holidays. That was everything, and it is in all humbleness that I say that I do not think the ill experiences of those years degraded me much. I managed to keep some truth and tenderness about me; and I am thankful to remember that I no more cringed to Crayshaw than Lorraine did, and that though I stayed there till I was a big boy, I never maltreated a little one.

CHAPTER XI.

"Whose powers shed round him in the common strife
Or mild concerns of ordinary life,
A constant influence, a peculiar grace;
* * * * * *
Or if an unexpected call succeed,
Come when it will, is equal to the need."
WORDSWORTH'S *Happy Warrior.*

JUDGMENT came at last. During my first holidays I had posted a letter from Lewis Lorraine to the uncle in India to whom he had before endeavoured to appeal. The envelope did not lack stamps, but the address was very imperfect, and it was many months in reaching him. He wrote a letter, which Lewis never received, Mr. Crayshaw probably knew why. But twelve months after that Colonel Jervois came to England, and he lost no time in betaking himself to Crayshaw's. From Crayshaw's he came to my father, the only "unexceptionable reference" left to Snuffy to put forward.

The Colonel came with a soldier's promptness, and, with the utmost courtesy of manner, went straight to

the point. His life had not accustomed him to our neighbourly unwillingness to interfere with anything that did not personally concern us, nor to the prudent patience with which country folk will wink long at local evils. In the upshot what he asked was what my mother had asked three years before. Had my father personal knowledge or good authority for believing the school to be a well-conducted one, and Mr. Crayshaw a fit man for his responsible post? Had he ever heard rumours to the man's discredit?

Replies that must do for a wife will not always answer a man who puts the same questions. My great-grandfather's memory was not evoked on this occasion, and my father frankly confessed that his personal knowledge of Crayshaw's was very small, and that the man on whose recommendation he had sent us to school there had just proved to be a rascal and a swindler. Our mother had certainly heard rumours of severity, but he had regarded her maternal anxiety as excessive, etc., etc. In short, my dear father saw that he had been wrong, and confessed it, and was now as ready as the Colonel to expose Snuffy's misdeeds.

No elaborate investigation was needed. An attack once made on Mr. Crayshaw's hollow reputation, it cracked on every side; first hints crept out, then scandals flew. The Colonel gave no quarter,

and he did not limit his interest to his own nephew.

"A widow's son, ma'am," so he said to my mother, bowing over her hand as he led her in to dinner, in a style to which we were quite unaccustomed; "a widow's son, ma'am, should find a father in every honest man who can assist him."

The tide having turned against Snuffy, his friends (of the Driver and Quills type) turned with it. But they gained nothing, for one morning he got up as early as we had done, and ran away, and I never heard of him again. And before nightfall the neighbours, who had so long tolerated his wickedness, broke every pane of glass in his windows.

During all this, Lewis Lorraine and his uncle stayed at our house. The Colonel spent his time between holding indignant investigations, writing indignant letters (which he allowed us to seal with his huge signet), and walking backwards and forwards to the town to buy presents for the little boys.

When Snuffy ran away, and the school was left to itself, Colonel Jervois strode off to the nearest farm, requisitioned a waggon, and having packed the boys into it, bought loaves and milk enough to breakfast them all, and transported the whole twenty-eight to our door. He left four with my

mother, and marched off with the rest. The Woods took in a large batch, and in the course of the afternoon he had for love or money quartered them all. He betrayed no nervousness in dealing with numbers, in foraging for supplies, or in asking for what he wanted. Whilst other people had been doubting whether it might not "create unpleasantness" to interfere in this case and that, the Colonel had fought each boy's battle, and seen most of them off on their homeward journeys. He was used to dealing with men, and with emergencies, and it puzzled him when my Uncle Henry consulted his law-books and advised caution, and my father saw his agent on farm business, whilst the fate of one of Crayshaw's victims yet hung in the balance.

When all was over the Colonel left us, and took Lewis with him, and his departure raised curiously mixed feelings of regret and relief.

He had quite won my mother's heart, chiefly by his energy and tenderness for the poor boys, and partly by his kindly courtesy and deference towards her. Indeed all ladies liked him—all, that is, who knew him. Before they came under the influence of his pleasantness and politeness, he shared the half-hostile reception to which any person or anything that was foreign to our daily experience was

subjected in our neighbourhood. So that the first time Colonel Jervois appeared in our pew, Mrs. Simpson (the wife of a well-to-do man of business who lived near us) said to my mother after church, "I see you've got one of the military with you," and her tone was more critical than congratulatory. But when my mother, with unconscious diplomacy, had kept her to luncheon, and the Colonel had handed her to her seat, and had stroked his moustache, and asked in his best manner if she meant to devote her son to the service of his country, Mrs. Simpson undid her bonnet-strings, fairly turned her back on my father, and was quite unconscious when Martha handed the potatoes; and she left us wreathed in smiles, and resolved that Mr. Simpson should buy their son Horace a commission instead of taking him into the business. Mr. Simpson did not share her views, and I believe he said some rather nasty things about swaggering, and not having one sixpence to rub against another. And Mrs. Simpson (who was really devoted to Horace and could hardly bear him out of her sight) reflected that it was possible to get shot as well as to grow a moustache if you went into the army; but she still maintained that she should always remember the Colonel as a thorough gentleman, and a wonderful judge of the character of boys.

The Colonel made great friends with the Woods, and he was deeply admired by our rector, who, like many parsons, had a very military heart, and delighted in exciting tales of the wide world which he could never explore. It was perhaps natural that my father should hardly be devoted to a stranger who had practically reproached his negligence, but the one thing that did draw him towards the old Indian officer was his habit of early rising. My father was always up before any of us, but he generally found the Colonel out before him, enjoying the early hours of the day as men who have lived in hot climates are accustomed to do. They used to come in together in very pleasant moods to breakfast; but with the post-bag Lorraine's uncle was sure to be moved to voluble indignation, or pity, or to Utopian plans to which my father listened with puzzled impatience. He did not understand the Colonel, which was perhaps not to be wondered at.

His moral courage had taken away our breath, and physical courage was stamped upon his outward man. If he was anything he was manly. It was because he was in some respects very womanly too, that he puzzled my father's purely masculine brain. The mixture, and the vehemence of the mixture, were not in his line. He would have

turned "Crayshaw's" matters over in his own mind as often as hay in a wet season before grappling with the whole bad business as the Colonel had done. And on the other hand, it made him feel uncomfortable and almost ashamed to see tears standing in the old soldier's eyes as he passionately blamed himself for what had been suffered by "my sister's son."

The servants one and all adored Colonel Jervois. They are rather acute judges of good breeding, and men and maids were at one on the fact that he was a visitor who conferred social distinction on the establishment. They had decided that we should "dine late so long as The Gentleman" was with us, whilst my mother was thinking how to break so weighty an innovation to such valuable servants. They served him with alacrity, and approved of his brief orders and gracious thanks. The Colonel did unheard-of things with impunity—threw open his bed-room shutters at night, and more than once unbarred and unbolted the front door to go outside for a late cigar. Nothing puzzled Martha more than the nattiness with which he put all the bolts and bars back into their places, as if he had been used to the door as long as she had.

Indeed he had all that power of making himself at home, which is most fully acquired by having

had to provide for yourself in strange places, but he carried it too far.

One day he penetrated into the kitchen (having previously been rummaging the kitchen-garden) and insisted upon teaching our cook how to make curry. The lesson was much needed, and it was equally well intended, but it was a mistake. Everything cannot be carried by storm, whatever the military may think. Jane said, "Yes, sir," at every point that approached to a pause in the Colonel's ample instructions, but she never moved her eyes from the magnificent moustache which drooped above the stew-pan, nor her thoughts from the one idea produced by the occasion—that The Gentleman had caught her without her cap. In short our curries were no worse, and no better, in consequence of the shock to kitchen etiquette (for that was all) which she received.

And yet we modified our household ways for him, as they were never modified for any one else. On Martha's weekly festival for cleaning the bedrooms (and if a room was occupied for a night, she scrubbed after the intruder as if he had brought the plague in his portmanteau) the smartest visitor we ever entertained had to pick his or her way through the upper regions of the house, where soap and soda were wafted on high and unexpected

breezes along passages filled with washstands and clothes-baskets, cane-seated chairs and baths, mops, pails and brooms. But the Colonel had "given such a jump" on meeting a towel-horse at large round a sharp corner, and had seemed so uncomfortable on finding everything that he thought was inside his room turned outside, that for that week Martha left the lower part of the house uncleaned, and did not turn either the dining or drawing rooms into the hall on their appointed days. She had her revenge when he was gone.

On the day of his departure, my lamentations had met with the warmest sympathy as I stirred toffy over Jane's kitchen fire, whilst Martha lingered with the breakfast things, after a fashion very unusual with her, and gazed at the toast-rack and said, "the Colonel had eaten nothing of a breakfast to travel on." But next morning, I met her in another mood. It was a mood to which we were not strangers, though it did not often occur. In brief, Martha (like many another invaluable domestic) "had a temper of her own"; but to do her justice her ill feelings generally expended themselves in a rage for work, and in taking as little ease herself as she allowed to other people. I knew what it meant when I found her cleaning the best silver when she ought to have been eating her breakfast; but my

head was so full of the Colonel, that I could not help talking about him, even if the temptation to tease Martha had not been overwhelming. No reply could I extract; only once, as she passed swiftly to the china cupboard, with the whole Crown Derby tea and coffee service on one big tray (the Colonel had praised her coffee), I heard her mutter—"Soldiers is very upsetting." Certainly, considering what she did in the way of scolding, scouring, blackleading, polishing and sand-papering that week, it was not Martha's fault if we did not "get straight again," furniture and feelings. I've heard her say that Calais sand would "fetch anything off," and I think it had fetched the Colonel off her heart by the time that the cleaning was done.

It had no such effect on mine. Lewis Lorraine himself did not worship his uncle more devoutly than I. Colonel Jervois had given me a new ideal. It was possible, then, to be enthusiastic without being unmanly; to live years out of England, and come back more patriotic than many people who stayed comfortably at home; to go forth into the world and be the simpler as well as the wiser, the softer as well as the stronger for the experience? So it seemed. And yet Lewis had told me, with such tears as Snuffy never made him shed, how

tender his uncle was to his unworthiness, what allowances he made for the worst that Lewis could say of himself, and what hope he gave him of a good and happy future.

"He cried as bad as I did," Lewis said, "and begged me to forgive him for having trusted so much to my other guardian. Do you know, Jack, Snuffy regularly forged a letter like my handwriting, to answer that one Uncle Eustace wrote, which he kept back? He might well do such good copies, and write the year of Our Lord with a swan at the end of the last flourish! And you remember what we heard about his having been in prison—but, oh, dear! I don't want to remember. He says I am to forget, and he forbade me to talk about Crayshaw's, and said I was not to trouble my head about anything that had happened there. He kept saying, 'Forget, my boy, forget! Say GOD help me, and look forward. While there's life there's always the chance of a better life for every one. Forget! forget!'"

Lewis departed with his uncle. Charlie went for two nights to the moors. Jem's holidays had not begun, and in our house we were "cleaning down" after the Colonel as if he had been the sweeps.

I went to old Isaac for sympathy. He had

become very rheumatic the last two years, but he was as intelligent as ever, and into his willing ear I poured all that I could tell of my hero, and much that I only imagined.

His sympathy met me more than half-way. The villagers as a body were unbounded in their approval of the Colonel, and Mrs. Irvine was even greedier than old Isaac for every particular I could impart respecting him.

"He's a *handsome* gentleman," said the bee-master's wife, "and he passed us (my neighbour, Mrs. Mettam, and me) as near, sir, as I am to you, with a gold-headed stick in his hand, and them lads following after him, for all the world like the Good Shepherd and his flock."

I managed not to laugh, and old Isaac added, "There's a many in this village, sir, would have been glad to have taken the liberty of expressing themselves to the Colonel, and a *depitation* did get as far as your father's gates one night, but they turned bashful and come home again. And I know, for one, Master Jack, that if me and my missus had had a room fit to offer one of them poor young gentlemen, I'd have given a week's wage to do it, and the old woman would have been happy to her dying day."

CHAPTER XII.

"God help me! save I take my part
Of danger on the roaring sea,
A devil rises in my heart,
Far worse than any death to me."

TENNYSON'S *Sailor-boy.*

THE fact that my father had sent me back against my will to a school where I had suffered so much and learnt so little, ought perhaps to have drawn us together when he discovered his mistake. Unfortunately it did not. He was deeply annoyed with himself for having been taken in by Snuffy, but he transferred some of this annoyance to me, on grounds which cut me to the soul, and which I fear I resented so much that I was not in a mood that was favourable to producing a better understanding between us. The injustice which I felt so keenly was, that my father reproached me with having what he called "kept him in the dark" about the life at Crayshaw's. At my age I must have seen how wicked the man and his system were.

I reminded him that I had run away from them once, and had told all that I dared, but that he would not hear me then. He would not hear me now.

"I don't wish to discuss the subject. It is a very painful one," he said (and I believe it was as physically distressing to him as the thought of Cripple Charlie's malformation). "I have no wish to force your confidence when it is too late," he added (and it was this which I felt to be so hard). "I don't blame you; you have other friends who suit you better, but you have never been fully open with me. All I can say is, if Mr. Wood was better informed than I have been, and did not acquaint me, he has behaved in a manner which—— There—don't speak! we'll dismiss the subject. You have suffered enough, if you have not acted as I should have expected you to act. I blame myself unutterably, and I hope I see my way to such a comfortable and respectable start in life for you that these three years in that vile place may not be to your permanent disadvantage."

I was just opening my lips to thank him, when he got up and went to his tall desk, where he took a pinch of snuff, and then added as he turned away, "Thank GOD I have *one* son who is frank with his father!"

My lips were sealed in an instant. This, then, was my reward for that hard journey of escape, with Jem on my back, which had only saved him; for

having stifled envy in gladness for his sake, when (in those bits of our different holidays which overlapped each other) I saw and felt the contrast between our opportunities; for having suffered my harder lot in silence that my mother might not fret, when I felt certain that my father would not interfere! My heart beat as if it would have pumped the tears into my eyes by main force, but I kept them back, and said steadily enough, "Is that all, sir?"

My father did not look up, but he nodded his head and said, "Yes; you may go."

As I went he called me back.

"Are you going to the farm this afternoon?

To my own infinite annoyance I blushed as I answered, "I was going to sit with Charlie a bit, unless you have any objection."

"Not at all. I only asked for information. I have no wish to interfere with any respectable friends you may be disposed to give your confidence to. But I should like it to be understood that either your mother or I must have some knowledge of your movements."

"Mother knew quite well I was going!" I exclaimed. "Why, I've got a parcel to take to Mrs. Wood from her."

"Very good. There's no occasion to display temper. Shut the door after you."

I shut it very gently. (If three years at Crayshaw's had taught me nothing else, it had taught me much self-control.) Then I got away to the first hiding-place I could find, and buried my head upon my arms. Would not a beating from Snuffy have been less hard to bear? Surely sore bones from those one despises are not so painful as a sore heart from those one loves.

Our household affections were too sound at the core for the mere fact of displeasing my father not to weigh heavily on my soul. But I could not help defending myself in my own mind against what I knew to be injustice.

Jem "frank with his father"? Well he might be, when our father's partiality met him half-way at every turn. *That* was no fancy of mine. I had the clearest of childish remembrances of an occasion when I wanted to do something which our farming-man thought my father would not approve, and how when I urged the fact that Jem had already done it with impunity, he shook his head wiseacrely, and said, "Aye, aye, Master Jack. But ye know they say some folks may steal a horse, when other folks mayn't look over the hedge."

The vagueness of "some folks" and "other folks" had left the proverb dark to my understanding when I heard it, but I remembered it till I understood it.

I never was really jealous of Jem. He was far too good-natured and unspoilt, and I was too fond of him. Besides which, if the mental tone of our country lives was at rather a dull level, it was also wholesomely unfavourable to the cultivation of morbid grievances, or the dissection of one's own hurt feelings. If I had told anybody about me, from my dear mother down to our farming-man, that I was misunderstood and wanted sympathy, I should probably have been answered that many a lad of my age was homeless and wanted boots. As a matter of reasoning the reply would have been defective, but for practical purposes it would have been much to the point. And it is fair to this rough-and-ready sort of philosophy to defend it from a common charge of selfishness. It was not that I should have been the happier because another lad was miserable, but that an awakened sympathy with his harder fate would tend to dwarf egotistic absorption in my own. Such considerations, in short, are no justification of those who are responsible for needless evil or neglected good, but they are handy helps to those who suffer from them, and who feel sadly sorry for themselves.

I am sure the early-begun and oft-reiterated teaching of daily thankfulness for daily blessing was very useful to me at Crayshaw's and has been useful to me ever since. With my dear mother herself it was

merely part of that pure and constant piety which ran through her daily life, like a stream that is never frozen and never runs dry. In me it had no such grace, but it was an early-taught good habit (as instinctive as any bodily habit) to feel—"Well, I'm thankful things are not so with me;" as quickly as "Ah, it might have been thus!" Looking at the fates and fortunes and dispositions of other boys, I had, even at Snuffy's "much to be thankful for" as well as much to endure, and it was a good thing for me that I could balance the two. For if the grace of thankfulness does not solve the riddles of life, it lends a willing shoulder to its common burdens.

I certainly had needed all my philosophy at home as well as at school. It was hard to come back, one holiday-time after another, ignorant except for books that I devoured in the holidays, and for my own independent studies of maps, and an old geography book at Snuffy's from which I was allowed to give lessons to the lowest form; rough in looks, and dress, and manners (I knew it, but it requires some self-respect even to use a nail-brush, and self-respect was next door to impossible at Crayshaw's); and with my north-country accent deepened, and my conversation disfigured by slang which, not being fashionable slang, was as inadmissible as thieves' lingo; it was hard, I say, to come back thus, and meet dear old Jem, and

generally one at least of his school-fellows whom he had asked to be allowed to invite—both of them well dressed, well cared for, and well mannered, full of games that were not in fashion at Crayshaw's, and slang as "correct" as it was unintelligible.

Jem's heart was as true to me as ever, but he was not so thin-skinned as I am. He was never a fellow who worried himself much about anything, and I don't think it struck him I could feel hurt or lonely. He would say, "I say, Jack, what a beastly way your hair is cut. I wish Father would let you come to our school:" or, "Don't say it was a dirty trick—say it was a beastly chouse, or something of that sort. We're awfully particular about talking at ——'s, and I don't want Cholmondley to hear you."

Jem was wonderfully polished-up himself, and as pugnacious on behalf of all the institutions of his school as he had once been about our pond. I got my hair as near right as one cutting and the town hair-cutter could bring it, and mended my manners and held my own with good temper. When it came to feats of skill or endurance, I more than held my own. Indeed, I so amazed one very "swell" little friend of Jem's whose mother (a titled lady) had allowed him to spend part of the summer holidays with Jem for change of air, that he vowed I must go and stay with him in the winter, and do juggler and

acrobat at their Christmas theatricals. But he may have reported me as being rough as well as ready, for her ladyship never ratified the invitation. Not that I would have left home at Christmas, and not that I lacked pleasure in the holidays. But other fashions of games and speech and boyish etiquette lay between me and Jem; hospitality, if not choice, kept him closely with his school-fellows, and neither they nor he had part in the day-dreams of my soul.

For the spell of the Penny Numbers had not grown weaker as I grew older. In the holidays I came back to them as to friends. At school they made the faded maps on Snuffy's dirty walls alive with visions, and many a night as I lay awake with pain and over-weariness in the stifling dormitory, my thoughts took refuge not in dreams of home nor in castles of the air, but in phantom ships that sailed for ever round the world.

The day of the interview with my father I roused myself from my grievances to consider a more practical question. Why should I not go to sea? No matter whose fault it was, there was no doubt that I was ill-educated, and that I did not please my father as Jem did. On the other hand I was strong and hardy, nimble and willing to obey; and I had roughed it enough, in all conscience. I must have ill luck indeed, if I lit upon a captain more cruel than

Mr. Crayshaw. I did not know exactly how it was to be accomplished, but I knew enough to know that I could not aim at the Royal Navy. Of course I should have preferred it. I had never seen naval officers, but if they were like officers in the army, like Colonel Jervois, for instance, it was with such a port and bearing that I would fain have carried myself when I grew up to be a man. I guessed, however, that money and many other considerations might make it impossible for me to be a midshipman; but I had heard of boys being apprenticed to merchant-vessels, and I resolved to ask my father if he would so apprentice me.

He refused, and he accompanied his refusal with an unfavourable commentary on my character and conduct, which was not the less bitter because the accusations were chiefly general.

This sudden fancy for the sea—well, if it were not a sudden fancy, but a dream of my life, what a painful instance it afforded of my habitual want of frankness! —This long-concealed project which I had suddenly brought to the surface—I had talked about it to my mother years ago, had I, but it had distressed her, and even to my father, but he had snubbed me?— then I had been deliberately fostering aims and plans to which I had always known that my parents would be opposed. My father didn't believe a word of it.

It was the old story. I must be peculiar at any price. I must have something new to amuse me, and be unlike the rest of the family. It was always the same. For years I had found more satisfaction from the conversation of a man who had spent ten years of his life in the hulks than from that of my own father. Then this Indian Colonel had taken my fancy, and it had made him sick to see the womanish—he could call it no better, the *weak-womanish*—way in which I worshipped him. If I were a daughter instead of a son, my caprices would distress and astonish him less. He could have sent me to my mother, and my mother might have sent me to my needle. In a son, from whom he looked for manly feeling and good English common-sense, it was painful in the extreme. Vanity, the love of my own way, and want of candour—(my father took a pinch of snuff between each count of the indictment)—these were my besetting sins, and would lead me into serious trouble. This new fad, just, too, when he had made most favourable arrangements for my admission into my Uncle Henry's office as the first step in a prosperous career. I didn't know; didn't I? Perhaps not. Perhaps I had been at the Woods' when he and my mother were speaking of it. But now I did know. The matter was decided, and he hoped I should profit by my opportunities. I might go, and I was to shut the door after me.

I omit what my father said of the matter from a religious point of view, though he accused me of flying in the face of Providence as well as the Fifth Commandment. The piety which kept a pure and God-fearing atmosphere about my home, and to which I owe all the strength I have found against evil since I left it, was far too sincere in both my parents for me to speak of any phase of it with disrespect. Though I may say here that I think it is to be wished that more good people exercised judgment as well as faith in tracing the will of Heaven in their own. Practically I did not even then believe that I was more "called" to that station of life which was to be found in Uncle Henry's office, than to that station of life which I should find on board a vessel in the Merchant Service, and it only discredited truth in my inmost soul when my father put his plans for my career in that light. Just as I could not help feeling it unfair that a commandment which might have been fairly appealed to if I had disobeyed him, should be used against me in argument because I disagreed with him.

I did disagree with him utterly. Uncle Henry's office was a gloomy place, where I had had to endure long periods of waiting as a child when my mother took us in to the dentist, and had shopping and visiting of uncertain length to do. Uncle Henry himself was no favourite with me. He was harder than my

father if you vexed him, and less genial when you didn't. And I wanted to go to sea. But it did not seem a light matter to me to oppose my parents, and they were both against me. My dear mother was thrown into the profoundest distress by the bare notion. In her view to be at sea was merely to run an imminent and ceaseless risk of shipwreck; and even this jeopardy of life and limb was secondary to the dangers that going ashore in foreign places would bring upon my mind and morals.

So when my father spoke kindly to me at supper, and said that he had arranged with Mr. Wood that I should read with him for two hours every evening, in preparation for my future life as an articled clerk, my heart was softened. I thanked him gratefully, and resolved for my own part to follow what seemed to be the plain path of duty, though it led to Uncle Henry's office, and not out into the world.

The capacity in which I began life in Uncle Henry's office was that of office boy, and the situation was attended in my case with many favourable conditions. Uncle Henry wished me to sleep on the premises, as my predecessor had done, but an accidental circumstance led to my coming home daily, which I infinitely preferred. This was nothing less than an outbreak of boils all over me, upon which, every domestic application having failed, and gallons

of herb tea only making me worse, Dr. Brown was called in, and pronounced my health in sore need of restoration. The regimen of Crayshaw's was not to be recovered from in a day, and the old doctor would not hear of my living altogether in the town. If I went to the office at all, he said, I must ride in early, and ride out in the evening. So much fresh air and exercise were imperative, and I must eat two solid meals a day under no less careful an eye than that of my mother.

She was delighted. She thought (even more than usual) that Doctor Brown was a very Solomon in spectacles, and I quite agreed with her. The few words that followed gave a slight shock to her favourable opinion of his wisdom, but I need hardly say that it confirmed mine.

He had given me a kindly slap on the shoulder, which happened at that moment to be the sorest point in my body, and I was in no small pain from head to foot. I only tightened my lips, but I suppose he bethought himself of what he had done, and he looked keenly at me and said, "You can bear pain, Master Jack?"

"Oh, Jack's a very brave boy," said my dear mother. "Indeed, he's only too brave. He upset his father and me terribly last week by wanting to go to sea instead of to the office."

"And much better for him, ma'am," said the old doctor, promptly; "he'll make a first-rate sailor, and if Crayshaw's is all the schooling he's had, a very indifferent clerk."

"That's just what I think!" I began, but my mother coloured crimson with distress, and I stopped, and went after her worsted ball which she had dropped, whilst she appealed to Doctor Brown.

"Pray don't say so, Doctor Brown. Jack is *very* good, and it's all *quite* decided. I couldn't part with him, and his father would be *so* annoyed if the subject——"

"Tut, tut, ma'am!" said the doctor, pocketing his spectacles; "I never interfere with family affairs, and I never repeat what I hear. The first rules of the profession, young gentleman, and very good general rules for anybody."

I got quite well again, and my new life began. I rode in and out of the town every day on Rob Roy, our red-haired pony. After tea I went to the farm to be taught by Mr. Wood, and at every opportunity I devoured such books as I could lay my hands on. I fear I had very little excuse for not being contented now. And yet I was not content.

It seems absurd to say that the drains had anything to do with it, but the horrible smell which pervaded the office added to the distastefulness of the

place, and made us all feel ill and fretful, except my uncle, and Moses Benson, the Jew clerk. He was never ill, and he said he smelt nothing; which shows that one may have a very big nose to very little purpose.

My uncle pooh-poohed the unwholesome state of the office, for two reasons which certainly had some weight. The first was that he himself had been there for five-and-twenty years without suffering by it; and the second was, that the defects of drainage were so radical that (the place belonging to that period of house-building when the system of drainage was often worse than none at all) half the premises, if not half the street, would have to be pulled down for any effectual remedy. So it was left as it was, and when Mr. Burton, the head clerk, had worse headaches than usual, he used to give me sixpence for chloride of lime, which I distributed at my discretion, and on those days Moses Benson used generally to say that he "fancied he smelt something."

Moses Benson was an articled clerk to my uncle, but he had no pretensions to be considered a gentleman. His father kept a small shop where second-hand watches were the most obvious goods; but the old man was said to have money, though the watches did not seem to sell very fast, and his son had duly qualified for his post, and had paid a good premium.

Moses was only two or three years older than I, not that I could have told anything about his age from his looks. He was sallow, and had a big nose; his hands were fat, his feet were small, and I think his head was large, but perhaps his hair made it look larger than it was, for it was thick and very black, and though it was curly, it was not like Jem's; the curls were more like short ringlets, and if he bent over his desk they hid his forehead, and when he put his head back to think, they lay on his coat-collar. And I suppose it was partly because he could not smell with his nose, that he used such very strong hair-oil, and so much of it. It used to make his coat-collar in a horrid state, but he always kept a little bottle of "scouring drops" on the ledge of his desk, and when it got very bad, I knelt behind him on the corner of his stool and scoured his coat-collar with a little bit of flannel. Not that I did it half so well as he could. He wore very odd-looking clothes, but he took great care of them, and was always touching them up, and "reviving" his hat with one of Mrs. O'Flannagan's irons. He used to sell bottles of the scouring drops to the other clerks, and once he got me to get my mother to buy some. He gave me a good many little odd jobs to do for him, but he always thanked me, and from the beginning to the end of our acquaintance he was invariably kind.

I remember a very odd scene that happened at the beginning of it.

Mr. Burton (the other clerk, whose time was to expire the following year, which was to make a vacancy for me) was a very different man from Moses Benson. He was respectably connected, and looked down on "the Jew-boy," but he was hot-tempered, and rather slow-witted, and I think Moses could manage him; and I think it was he who kept their constant "tiffs" from coming to real quarrels.

One day, very soon after I began office-life, Benson sent me out to get him some fancy note-paper, and when I came back I saw the red-haired Mr. Burton standing by the desk and looking rather more sickly and cross than usual. I laid down the paper and the change, and asked if Benson wanted anything else. He thanked me exceedingly kindly, and said, "No," and I went out of the enclosure and back to the corner where I had been cutting out some newspaper extracts for my uncle. At the same time I drew from under my overcoat which was lying there, an old railway volume of one of Cooper's novels which Charlie had lent me. I ought not to have been reading novels in office-hours, but I had had to stop short last night because my candle went out just at the most exciting point, and I had had no time to see what became of everybody before I

started for town in the morning. I could bear suspense no longer, and plunged into my book.

How it was in these circumstances that I heard what the two clerks were saying, I don't know. They talked constantly in these open enclosures, when they knew I was within hearing. On this occasion I suppose they thought I had gone out, and it was some minutes before I discovered that they were talking of me. Burton spoke first, and in an irritated tone.

"You treat this young shaver precious different to the last one."

The Jew spoke very softly, and with an occasional softening of the consonants in his words. "How obsherving you are!" said he.

Burton snorted. "It don't take much observation to see that. But I suppose you have your reasons. You Jews are always so sly. That's how you get on so, I suppose."

"You Gentiles," replied Moses (and the Jew's voice had tones which gave him an infinite advantage in retaliating scorn), "you Gentiles would do as well as we do if you were able to foresee and knew how to wait. You have all the selfishness for success, my dear, but the gifts of prophecy and patience are wanting to you."

"That's nothing to do with your little game about

the boy," said Burton; "however, I suppose you can keep your own secrets."

"I have no secrets," said Moses gently. "And if you take my advice, you never will have. If you have no secrets, my dear, they will never be found out. If you tell your little designs, your best friends will be satisfied, and will not invent less creditable ones for you."

"If they did, you'd talk 'em down," said Burton roughly. "Short of a woman I never met such a hand at jaw. You'll be in Parliament yet——" ("It is possible!" said the Jew hastily,) "with that long tongue of yours. But you haven't told us about the boy, for all you've said."

"About this boy," said Moses, "a proverb will be shorter than my jaw. 'The son of the house is not a servant for ever.' As to the other—he was taken for charity and dismissed for theft, is it not so? He came from the dirt, and he went back to the dirt. They often do. Why should I be civil to him?"

What reply Mr. Burton would have made to this question I had no opportunity of judging. My uncle called him, and he ran hastily up-stairs. And when he had gone, the Jew came slowly out, and crossed the office as if he were going into the street. By this time my conscience was pricking hard, and I shoved

my book under my coat and called to him: "Mr. Benson."

"You?" he said.

"I am very sorry," I stammered, blushing, "but I heard what you were saying. I did not mean to listen. I thought you knew that I was there."

"It is of no importance," he said, turning away; "I have no secrets."

But I detained him.

"Mr. Benson! Tell me, please. You *were* talking about me, weren't you? What did you mean about the son of the house not being a servant for ever?"

He hesitated for an instant, and then turned round and came nearer to me.

"It is true, is it not?" he said. "Next year you may be clerk. In time you may be your uncle's confidential clerk, which I should like to be myself. You may eventually be partner, as I should like to be; and in the long run you may succeed him, as I should like to do. It is a good business, my dear, a sound business, a business of which much, very much, more might be made. You might die rich, very rich. You might be mayor, you might be Member, you might—but what is the use? *You will not.* You do not see it, though I am telling you. You will not wait for it, though it would come. What is that book you hid when I came in?"

"It is about North American Indians," said I, dragging it forth. "I am very sorry, but I left off last night at such an exciting bit."

The Jew was thumbing the pages, with his black ringlets close above them.

"Novels in office-hours!" said he; but he was very good-natured about it, and added, "I've one or two books at home, if you're fond of this kind of reading, and will promise me not to forget your duties."

"Oh, I promise!" said I.

"I'll put them under my desk in the corner," he said; "indeed, I would part with some of them for a trifle."

I thanked him warmly, but what he had said was still hanging in my mind, and I added, "Are there real prophets among the Jews now-a-days, Mr. Benson?"

"They will make nothing by it, if there are," said he; and there was a tone of mysteriousness in his manner of speaking which roused my romantic curiosity. "A few of ush (very few, my dear!) mould our own fates, and the lives of the rest are moulded by what men have within them rather than by what they find without. If there were a true prophet in every market-place to tell each man of his future, it would not alter the destinies of seven men in thish wide world."

As Moses spoke the swing door was pushed open, and one of my uncle's clients entered. He was an influential man, and a very tall one. The Jew bent his ringlets before him, almost beneath his elbow, and slipped out as he came in.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Then, hey for boot and horse, lad,
And round the world away!
Young blood must have its course, lad,
And every dog his day."—C. KINGSLEY.

MOSES BENSON was as good as his word in the matter of books of adventure. Dirty books, some without backs, and some with very greasy ones (for which, if I bought them, I seldom paid more than half-price), but full of dangers and discoveries, the mightiness of manhood, and the wonders of the world. I read them at odd moments of my working hours, and dreamed of them when I went home to bed. And it was more fascinating still to look out, with Charlie's help, in the Penny Numbers, for the foreign places, and people, and creatures mentioned in the tales, and to find that the truth was often stranger than the fiction.

To live a fancy-life of adventure in my own head, was not merely an amusement to me at this time—it was a refuge. Matters did not really improve between

me and my father, though I had obeyed his wishes. It was by his arrangement that I spent so much of my time at home with the Woods, and yet it remained a grievance that I liked to do so. Whether my dear mother had given up all hopes of my becoming a genius I do not know, but my father's contempt for my absorption in a book was unabated. I felt this if he came suddenly upon me with my head in my hands and my nose in a tattered volume; and if I went on with my reading it was with a sense of being in the wrong, whilst if I shut up the book and tried to throw myself into outside interests, my father's manner showed me that my efforts had only discredited my candour.

As is commonly the case, it was chiefly little things that pulled the wrong way of the stuff of life between us, but they pulled it very much askew. I was selfishly absorbed in my own dreams, and I think my dear father made a mistake which is a too common bit of tyranny between people who love each other and live together. He was not satisfied with my *doing* what he liked, he expected me to *be* what he liked, that is, to be another person instead of myself. Wives and daughters seem now and then to respond to this expectation as to the call of duty, and to become inconsistent echoes, odd mixtures of severity and hesitancy, hypocrites on the highest grounds; but

sons are not often so self-effacing, and it was not the case with me. It was so much the case with my dear mother, that she never was of the slightest use (which she might have been) when my father and I misunderstood each other. By my father's views of the moment she always hastily set her own, whether they were fair or unfair to me; and she made up for it by indulging me at every point that did not cross an expressed wish of my father's, or that could not annoy him because he was not there. She never held the scales between us.

And yet it was the thought of her which kept me from taking my fate into my own hands again and again. To have obeyed my father seemed to have done so little towards making him satisfied with me, that I found no consolation at home for the distastefulness of the office; and more than once I resolved to run away, and either enlist or go to Liverpool (which was at no great distance from us) and get on board some vessel that was about to sail for other lands. But when I thought of my mother's distress, I could not face it, and I let my half-formed projects slide again.

Oddly enough, it was Uncle Henry who brought matters to a crisis. I think my father was disappointed (though he did not blame me) that I secured no warmer a place in Uncle Henry's affections than I

did. Uncle Henry had no children, and if he took a fancy to me and I pleased him, such a career as the Jew-clerk had sketched for me would probably be mine. This dawned on me by degrees through chance remarks from my father and the more open comments of friends. For good manners with us were not of a sensitively refined order, and to be clapped on the back with—"Well, Jack, you've got into a good berth, I hear. I suppose you look to succeed your uncle some day?" was reckoned a friendly familiarity rather than an offensive impertinence.

I learned that my parents had hoped that, as I was his nephew, Uncle Henry would take me as clerk without the usual premium. Indeed, when my uncle first urged my going to him, he had more than hinted that he should not expect a premium with his brother's son. But he was fond of his money (of which he had plenty), and when people are that, they are apt to begin to grudge, if there is time, between promise and performance. Uncle Henry had a whole year in which to think about foregoing two or three hundred pounds, and as it drew to a close, it seemed to worry him to such a degree, that he proposed to take me for half the usual premium instead of completely remitting it; and he said something about my being a stupid sort of boy, and of very little use to him for some time to come. He said it

to justify himself for drawing back, I am quite sure, but it did me no good at home.

My father had plenty of honourable pride, and he would hear of no compromise. He said that he should pay the full premium for me that Uncle Henry's other clerks had had to pay, and from this no revulsion of feeling on my uncle's part would move him. He was quite bland with Uncle Henry, and he was not quite bland towards me.

When I fairly grasped the situation (and I contrived to get a pretty clear account of it from my mother), there rushed upon me the conviction that a new phase had come over my prospects. When I put aside my own longings for my father's will; and every time that office-life seemed intolerable to me, and I was tempted to break my bonds, and thought better of it and settled down again, this thought had always remained behind: "I will try; and if the worst comes to the worst, and I really cannot settle down into a clerk, I can but run away then." But circumstances had altered my case. I felt that now I must make up my mind for good and all. My father would have to make some little sacrifices to find the money, and when it was once paid, I could not let it be in vain. Come what might, I must stick to the office then, and for life.

Some weeks passed whilst I was turning this over

and over in my mind. I was constantly forgetting things in the office, but Moses Benson helped me out of every scrape. He was kinder and kinder, so that I often felt sorry that I could not feel fonder of him, and that his notions of fun and amusement only disgusted me instead of making us friends. They convinced me of one thing. My dear mother's chief dread about my going out of my own country was for the wicked ways I might learn in strange lands. A town with an unpronounceable name suggested foreign iniquities to her tender fears, but our own town, where she and everybody we knew bought everything we daily used, did not frighten her at all. I did not tell her, but I was quite convinced myself that I might get pretty deep into mischief in my idle hours, even if I lived within five miles of home, and had only my uncle's clerks for my comrades.

During these weeks Jem came home for the holidays. He was at a public school now, which many of our friends regarded as an extravagant folly on my father's part. We had a very happy time together, and this would have gone far to keep me at home, if it had not, at the same time, deepened my disgust with our town, and my companions in the office. In plain English, the training of two good schools, and the society of boys superior to himself, had made a gentleman of Jem, and the contrast be-

tween his looks and ways, and manners, and those of my uncle's clerks were not favourable to the latter. How proud my father was of him! With me he was in a most irritable mood; and one grumble to which I heard him give utterance, that it was very inconvenient to have to pay this money just at the most expensive period of Jem's education, went heavily into the scale for running away. And that night, as it happened, Jem and I sat up late, and had a long and loving chat. He abused the office to my heart's content, and was very sympathetic when I told him that I had wished to go to sea, and how my father had refused to allow me.

"I think he made a great mistake," said Jem; and he told me of "a fellow's brother" that he knew about, who was in the Merchant Service, and how well he was doing. "It's not even as if Uncle Henry were coming out generously," he added.

Dear, dear! How pleasant it was to hear somebody else talk on my side of the question. And who was I that I should rebuke Jem for calling our worthy uncle a curmudgeon, and stigmatizing the Jew-clerk as a dirty beast? I really dared not tell him that Moses grew more familiar as my time to be articled drew near; that he called me Jack Sprat, and his dearest friend, and offered to procure me the "silver-top" (or champagne)—which he said I must "stand" on

the day I took my place at the fellow desk to his—of the first quality and at less than cost price; and that he had provided me gratis with a choice of "excuses" (they were unblushing lies) to give to our good mother for spending that evening in town, and "having a spree."

From my affairs we came to talk of Jem's, and I found that even he, poor chap! was not without his troubles. He confided to me, with many expressions of shame and vexation, that he had got into debt, but having brought home good reports and even a prize on this occasion, he hoped to persuade my father to pay what he owed.

"You see, Jack, he's awfully good to me, but he will do things his own way, and what's worse, the way they were done in his young days. You remember the row we had about his giving me an allowance? He didn't want to, because he never had one, only tips from his governor when the old gentleman was pleased with him. And he said it was quite enough to send me to such a good and expensive school, and I ought to think of that, and not want more because I had got much. We'd an awful row, for I thought it was so unfair his making out I was greedy and ungrateful, and I told him so, and I said I was quite game to go to a cheap school if he liked, only wherever I was I did want to be 'like the other fellows.' I begged him to

take me away and to let me go somewhere cheap with you; and I said, if the fellows there had no allowances, we could do without. As I told him, it's not the beastly things that you buy that you care about, only of course you don't like to be the only fellow who can't buy 'em. So then he came round, and said I should have an allowance, but I must do with a very small one. So I said, Very well, then I mustn't go in for the games. Then he wouldn't have that; so then I made out a list of what the subscriptions are to cricket, and so on, and then your flannels and shoes, and it came to double what he offered me. He said it was simply disgraceful that boys shouldn't be able to be properly educated, and have an honest game at cricket for the huge price he paid, without the parents being fleeced for all sorts of extravagances at exorbitant prices. And I know well enough it's disgraceful, what we have to pay for school books and for things of all sorts you have to get in the town; but, as I said to the governor, why don't you kick up a dust with the head master, or write to the papers—what's the good of rowing us? One must have what other fellows have, and get 'em where other fellows get 'em. But he never did—I wish he would. I should enjoy fighting old Pompous if I were in his place. But they're as civil as butter to each other, and then old Pompous goes on feathering his nest, and backing up the tradespeople,

and the governor pitches into the young men of the present day."

"He did give you the bigger allowance, didn't he?" said I, at this pause in Jem's rhetoric.

"Yes, he did. He's awfully good to me. But you know, Jack, he never paid it quite all, and he never paid it quite in time. I found out from my mother he did it on purpose to make me value it more, and be more careful. Doesn't it seem odd he shouldn't see that I can't pay the subscriptions a few shillings short or a few days late? One must find the money somehow, and then one has to pay for that, and then you're short, and go on tick, and it runs up, and then they dun you, and you're cleaned out, and there you are!"

At which climax old Jem laid his curly head on his arms, and I began to think very seriously.

"How much do you owe?"

Jem couldn't say. He thought he could reckon up, so I got a pencil and made a list from his dictation, and from his memory, which was rather vague. When it was done (and there seemed to be a misty margin beyond), I was horrified. "Why, my dear fellow!" I exclaimed, "if you'd had your allowance ever so regularly, it wouldn't have covered this sort of thing."

"I know, I know," said poor Jem, clutching remorsefully at his curls. "I've been a regular fool!

Jack! whatever you do—never tick. It's the very mischief. You never know what you owe, and so you feel vague and order more. And you never know what you don't owe, which is worse, for sometimes you're in such despair, it would be quite a relief to catch some complaint and die. It's like going about with a stone round your neck, and nobody kind enough to drown you. I can't stand any more of it. I shall make a clean breast to Father, and if he can't set me straight, I won't go back; I'll work on the farm sooner, and let him pay my bills instead of my schooling—and serve old Pompous right."

Poor Jem! long after he had cheered up and gone to bed, I sat up and thought. When my premium was paid where was the money for Jem's debts to come from? And would my father be in the humour to pay them? If he did not, Jem would not go back to school. Of that I was quite certain. Jem had thought over his affairs, which was an effort for him, but he always thought in one direction. His thoughts never went backwards and forwards as mine did. If he had made up his mind, there was no more prospect of his changing it than if he had been my father. And if the happy terms between them were broken, and Jem's career checked when he was doing so well!—the scales that weighed my own future were becoming very uneven now.

I clasped my hands and thought. If I ran away, the money would be there for Jem's debts, and his errors would look pale in the light of my audacity, and he would be dearer than ever at home, whilst for me were freedom, independence (for I had not a doubt of earning bread-and-cheese, if only as a working man): perhaps a better understanding with my father when I had been able to prove my courage and industry, or even when he got the temperate and dutiful letter I meant to post to him when I was fairly off; and beyond all, the desire of my eyes, the sight of the world.

Should I stay now? And for what? To see old Jem at logger-heads with my father, and perhaps demoralized by an inferior school? To turn my own back and shut my eyes for ever on all that the wide seas embrace; my highest goal to be to grow as rich as Uncle Henry or richer, and perhaps as mean or meaner? Should I choose for life a life I hated, and set seals to my choice by drinking silver-top with the Jew-clerk?—No, Moses, no!

* * * * *

I got up soon after dawn and was in the garden at sunrise the morning that I ran away. I had made my plans carefully, and carried them out, so far with success.

Including the old miser's bequest which his lawyer

had paid, there were thirteen pounds to my name in the town savings-bank, and this sum I had drawn out to begin life with. I wrapped a five-pound note in a loving letter to Jem, and put both into the hymn-book on his shelf—I knew it would not be opened till Sunday. Very few runaways have as much as eight pounds to make a start with : and as one could not be quite certain how my father would receive Jem's confession, I thought he might be glad of a few pounds of his own, and I knew he had spent his share of the miser's money long ago.

I meant to walk to a station about seven miles distant, and there take train for Liverpool. I should be clumsy indeed, I thought, if I could not stow away on board some vessel, as hundreds of lads had done before me, and make myself sufficiently useful to pay my passage when I was found out.

When I got into the garden I kicked my foot against something in the grass. It was my mother's little gardening-fork. She had been tidying her pet perennial border, and my father had called her hastily, and she had left it half finished, and had forgotten the fork. A few minutes more or less were of no great importance to me, for it was very early, so I finished the border quite neatly, and took the fork indoors.

I put it in a corner of the hall where the light was growing stronger and making familiar objects clear.

In a house like ours and amongst people like us, furniture was not chopped and changed and decorated as it is now. The place had looked like this ever since I could remember, and it would look like this to-morrow morning, though my eyes would not see it. I stood stupidly by the hall table where my father's gloves lay neatly one upon the other beside his hat. I took them up, almost mechanically, and separated them, and laid them together again finger to finger, and thumb to thumb, and held them with a stupid sort of feeling, as if I could never put them down and go away.

What would my father's face be like when he took them up this very morning to go out and look for me? and when—oh when!—should I see his face again?

I began to feel what one is apt to learn too late, that in childhood one takes the happiness of home for granted, and kicks against the pricks of its grievances, not having felt the far harder buffetings of the world. Moreover (which one does not think of then), that parental blunders and injustices are the mistakes and tyrannies of a special love that one may go many a mile on one's own wilful way and not meet a second time. Who—in the wide world—would care to be bothered with my confidence, and blame me for withholding it? Should I meet many people to whom it would matter if we misunderstood each other? Would anybody hereafter love me well enough to be

disappointed in me? Would other men care so much for my fate as to insist on guiding it by lines of their own ruling?

I pressed the gloves passionately against my eyes to keep in the tears. If my day-dreams had been the only question, I should have changed my mind now. If the home grievances had been all, I should have waited for time and patience to mend them. I could not have broken all these heart-strings. I should never have run away. But there was much more, and my convictions were not changed, though I felt as if I might have managed better as regards my father.

Would he forgive me? I hoped and believed so. Would my mother forgive me? I knew she would—as GOD forgives.

And with the thought of her, I knelt down, and put my head on the hall table and prayed from my soul—not for fair winds, and prosperous voyages, and good luck, and great adventures; but that it might please GOD to let me see Home again, and the faces that I loved, ah, so dearly, after all!

And then I got up, and crossed the threshold, and went out into the world.

END OF PART I.

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